

T W E L V E
D I S C O U R S E S,

DELIVERED CHIEFLY AT

THE MEETING-HOUSE

OF THE PEOPLE CALLED

Q U A K E R S,

IN THE PARK,

Southwark,

BY THE LATE

THOMAS LETCHWORTH.

L O N D O N:

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P R E F A C E.

TH E S E Discourses were taken in short-hand at the time of delivery, by a person not in the same religious community with the preacher. A few necessary corrections of grammatical inaccuracies have been since made ; and, in some instances, a more complete citation of the texts adduced. In quotations made from memory, it must frequently happen that the words are not quite exact. It sufficiently

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ficiently answered the speaker's purpose if the general import of the passage was conveyed, and expressions, which thus qualify the citation, are frequently introduced, and always to be implied.

It is well known that the ministers of the religious society, with whom the author of these Discourses professed, disclaim all previous study in the composition of their extemporaneous sermons. It cannot, therefore, be expected that they should be exact in methodical arrangement, or abound in the embellishments of modern eloquence. What was not attempted it is no disgrace not to have attained. It may, however, perhaps, justly be a matter of doubt whether that zeal and energy of delivery, which arise from the feelings of the moment, may not, in their effects on the audience, more than counterbalance the cool correctness of studied oratory. The Quakers lay down few dogmas, and seldom enlarge on those mysterious points of theology which have so much divided the Christian world, and have

have mostly occasioned contention in proportion to their obscurity. The doctrine of universal grace, of which a manifestation, or portion, is given to every man, and by obedience to which he is enabled to fulfil his duty, and to walk acceptably with his Creator, is the leading principle of that society, who hold, as the necessary result of it, that true worship consists in a humble prostration of heart and communion of spirit with the Father of mercies, and is therefore perfectly consistent with a state of silence. These points are inculcated in the following pages, perhaps, to a degree of tautology, for which an extract from one of the Discourses, in the preacher's own words, may furnish the best excuse.

“ Though it is probable that what I
 “ have sometimes delivered may have been
 “ more or less similar to that which I have
 “ aforetime delivered, yet I hope that even
 “ a repetition of doctrines and advices,
 “ which we are urged to deliver from a
 “ sense of duty, may not be as water spilt

“ upon a stone, but may have a tendency
 “ (if not to convey any material informa-
 “ tion to the understanding) to stir up at
 “ least the pure mind by way of remem-
 “ brance.”

The love of fame, taken as a general principle, and including the desire of being esteemed and approved by one's friends, frequently mingles itself with our best motives. But, though this passion may, in a public preacher, receive some gratification from the silent and solemn attention of the hearers, it would scarcely excite a prudent man to expect any increase of reputation from the publication of Discourses, of which the subject and arrangement were not pre-conceived, and the expressions such as were suggested at the instant. In the present instance, at least, no imputation of this sort can arise to the author of these Discourses, who is removed from the scene, and the influence of all earthly passions. The apology for the present publication rests on the hope that impressions of a salutary

tary nature may, by this means, be renewed on such minds as are sincerely desirous of fulfilling the duties of their station, and of reaching the haven of eternal rest.

A friend of the author has favoured us with the following brief account of him.

Thomas Letchworth was born at Woodbridge, in the county of Suffolk, in the year 1739. His parents were of the people called Quakers, and his father, a tradesman in that town, was a preacher among them. In that religious society, the earnings of honest industry are thought to be a mode of maintenance more consistent with the evangelical qualifications required in a Christian minister, and with the influence he ought to possess in his congregation, than legal stipends or gratuitous contributions, which too frequently occasion contention in the one instance, or dependence in the other. He received from his father, who had a numerous family, the common education of a boarding-school at Hartford, and was afterwards put apprentice to

a linen-draper at Epping. In the early part of his life, he was of a consumptive habit; and this imperfect state of his health probably conspired with a disposition, naturally reflective and serious, to impress on his mind a strong sense of the vanity of human desires, and the importance of religious duty. Before he was twenty years of age, he began his ministerial services, in which he was particularly desirous to inculcate on the minds of young people a frequent consideration of their latter end, and of the awful concerns of futurity. His Discourses were copious, animated, and pathetic; but, perhaps, not altogether free from a certain inflation of language, to which men of fervid imaginations, in expressing their first conceptions, are frequently subject. His services were, however, mostly acceptable, and he spent a considerable portion of his time in visiting different parts of the country on a religious account. At this period, he kept a shop in Crispin-street, Spital-fields, whence he removed to
 Ampthill,

Amphill, in Bedfordshire, but afterwards returned to London, in which city, or its vicinity, he continued to reside till near his decease.

He was not much conversant in the learned languages, but his reading in his native tongue was pretty extensive. History, natural philosophy, the rudiments of medicine and anatomy, the leading principles of astronomy, and even the charms of poetry, furnished him with matter of meditation and amusement in his leisure hours. But his favourite study was the mysterious operations of the human mind, the passions which actuate it, the nature of its union with the body, the reasonable hope of its immortality, the principles of identity, liberty, necessity, and all those branches which constitute the sublime but obscure science of metaphysics. He was well versed in most of the writers on these subjects, nor did the different opinions of religious sects, both in his own and in former periods of history, escape his close examination. The *dernier result* of his enquiries

quiries may be learned from the following paper, found among his manuscripts with that very title ; and it were to be wished that every inquiry and controversy concerning such subjects might terminate in the same humble and liberal manner.

“ From an honest intention of acting
 “ consistently with the relation I bear to
 “ God, my Maker, and to my fellow-crea-
 “ tures, I have carefully reviewed most of
 “ the religious sentiments, on those subjects,
 “ held by any society of men in the known
 “ world. I have put a period to my re-
 “ searches into the books and opinions of
 “ men, and have concluded to resign my-
 “ self in future to the guidance of those
 “ sensations which I feel to increase my
 “ love to God and to mankind, and to pur-
 “ sue such measures of conduct in religion
 “ and morality, the prosecution of which
 “ gives me the most peace ; and to judge no
 “ man, neither pretend to exalt my opinions
 “ and practices to judge of the rectitude of o-
 “ ther mens by. Let others do as they
 “ will,

" will, as for me I will endeavour to seek
 " peace, and ensue it. A man cannot be
 " happy, whatever notions, or opinions,
 " he may hold, or whatever measures of
 " conduct he may pursue, unless, in the
 " holding of such opinions, and in being
 " found in the prosecution of such mea-
 " sures, he feels himself easy and comfort-
 " ed at heart. Let this rule of my future
 " conduct be termed erroneous, defective,
 " an illusion, or what not — it is the best
 " rule of my faith and manners which I
 " have been able to find after a close enqui-
 " ry of fifteen years. *Glory to God in the*
 " *highest, on earth peace, and good-will to*
 " *men,* is, and I hope ever will be, the lan-
 " guage of my soul. Amen."

At what time this summary of his re-
 searches was written does not appear ; pro-
 bably some years before his decease. The
 following extracts from three letters, written
 to a friend during his last illness, the two lat-
 ter a short time before his death, will shew
 that these sentiments retained their impres-
 sion

sion to the last: they will shew that he possessed what, in such moments, it is better to possess than the treasures of the rich or the knowledge of the learned, a spirit of resignation and peace, and a humble but earnest hope in the mercies of the Almighty.

“ *Fourteenth of the twelfth month, 1783.* I
 “ am now better than when thou ledest me.
 “ My little bark sprang a leak some months
 “ ago, which gradually gained on the pump
 “ until every effort to save her seemed to be
 “ made in vain, and destruction seemed inevitable. The moment was awful, but
 “ not fearful. I felt an entire resignation
 “ to the appointment of our heavenly Father. I have not to tell of being lifted
 “ up to extacy in visions, nor of my fears
 “ having been alarmed by any terrific
 “ dreams. To God, my Maker, I looked
 “ singly. My dependence was fixed on
 “ him alone. A sober humbling sense of
 “ his presence and providence prevented
 “ fear, and inspired hope.”

“ *Eleventh*

" *Eleventh of the ninth month, 1784.* I
" find myself still losing flesh, and rather
" weaker, but, in some other respects, ra-
" ther better. I know not what to think.
" Here I am

" Safe in the hands of one disposing Power,

" Or in the natal, or the mortal, hour,"

" enjoying every gleam of sunshine to
" the utmost, and bearing, with as much
" patience and resignation as possible, the
" cloudy days and starless nights some-
" times allotted me under the present dis-
" pensation."

" *Twenty-eighth of the tenth month, 1784.*

" This disorder has much reduced my flesh
" and my strength; but I am scarcely in
" any pain; nor am I sensible at present of
" any symptom which threatens any. The
" account I received by thy letter of our
" friend ***** affected me much. We
" seem to be in a similar weak state, and
" as it were dissolving apace into the earth
" whence we originally sprang; for, *dust*
" *thou art, and to dust thou shalt return:*
" and, whenever we die, whether soon or
" late,

" late, I hope we shall have an unshaken
 " trust in the common Father of us all,
 " and resign to the common lot of all flesh
 " with composure and without regret. Re-
 " member me not as a forsaken and misera-
 " ble man, for I enjoy even now, and suf-
 " fer but little, very little, comparatively
 " speaking. I rejoice in the good provi-
 " dence of God, which is over us all con-
 " tinually for our good, and is alike gra-
 " cious to all his creatures in what he gives
 " and what he denies them. And, in all
 " the dispensations of his wisdom, let us
 " trust in him, our common Father, Pro-
 " tector, and Friend."

He at length gradually sunk under the
 slow but irresistible force of a consumption,
 and departed on the 7th of the eleventh
 month, (November,) 1784, at the house of
 a friend at Newbury, in Berkshire. From
 the foregoing account of the state of his
 mind, it is almost needless to add that he
 met death with a becoming and humble for-
 titude. He was interred, at his own re-
 quest,

quest, in the Quakers burial-ground at Reading, on the 14th of the month above-mentioned; and his funeral was attended by a great number of his friends, who were desirous of testifying their esteem for his memory by this last mark of attention.

N. B. *The first Discourse in this collection has been incorrectly printed in Ireland, and attributed to another preacher. It is now printed from a more correct copy, and restored to the proper owner.*

DISCOURSE

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DISCOURSE

DISCOURSES.

DISCOURSE I.

THERE is a passage of sacred writ
which has been revived in my re-
membrance during the silence of
this meeting; and the train of reflections
which it excited has sealed instruction to my
mind, and furnished me with renewed cause
for humiliation and gratitude. The im-
port of it is this: *Men and brethren, what
shall we do to be saved?*

No person, who seriously believes in the
existence of a God, in a future state, and
in the awful doctrine of rewards and pu-
nishments,

nishments, can be indifferent respecting what may be his lot, when he shall be dispossessed of this frail tabernacle of clay which he now inhabits, and which is approaching to the period of its dissolution. It cannot be a matter of indifference to him, whether he shall finally receive the irrevocable sentence of *Go, ye cursed*, into the regions of unspeakable misery; or, *Come, ye blessed of my Father*, inherit the kingdom prepared for the righteous;—enter thou into the joy of thy Lord, and into thy Master's rest.

This concern has prompted many to enquire what is essentially necessary for them to believe and practise, in order to render themselves the proper objects of divine complacence, and furnish them with a well-grounded hope of a happy and glorious immortality.

The honest and sincere, in every nation under heaven, have formed different ideas of the requisites of salvation; and they have, of course, pursued as different measures

fures to accomplish that desirable and blessed end.

It does not appear to be my present business to particularise any of the various systems of faith which are adopted by any party amongst mankind. It is not to controvert matters in which sincere men of various denominations most surely believe, but rather to recommend them to stand open always to conviction, and to a strict attention to those rules of conduct, which, on an impartial examination, appear to them most agreeable to the will of heaven. I shall therefore address myself to those, in whatever religious society they are found, whose honest inquiries have not yet been attended with sufficient conviction, — have not yet led them clearly to perceive what the terms are on which their future happiness depends, and are, therefore, looking one upon another, whilst this important question is found at least in their *hearts*, if not in their *mouths*, *Men and brethren, what shall we do to be saved?* An inquiry of

this solemn nature, arising from a proper sensibility of the want of better instruction, is an indication of that concern and holy anxiety which will ever be acceptable to the Father of sure mercies. He regards such humble inquirers, after truth and peace with him, with gracious condescension, and, if they rely on the guidance of his Spirit, will finally conduct them to his glorious rest.

I shall not presume arrogantly to dictate to any, respecting matters of so important a concern as that of the soul's salvation. Every man should exercise those talents and gifts, with which the Father of Lights has endued him, in a close and sincere attention to the voice of the internal teacher, and in the discovery of those truths, both practical and speculative, which have an immediate relation to the happiness of a being circumstanced as he is. I shall simply propose those things which, in my view, and from my own experience as an individual, appear

pear to me worthy of God for their author,
and worthy of man's most serious attention.

It is an indisputable truth that we made not ourselves : *It is he that hath made us,* said the Psalmist, *and not we ourselves,* for *we are also his offspring.* The matter which forms the universe, the vehicles which the soul informs, and the more noble intellectual powers and faculties we possess, derive their being from the eternal Fountain of all power and intelligence, whom we characterise by the awful names of Jah, Jehovah, and God. It is also indisputably evident to me, that we were brought into existence with the benevolent design of our finally sustaining the confluent dignities of glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life. The Lord Almighty hath, in unspeakable mercy, designed, that, after we have endured a season of probation, a conflict with our passions, excited by numerous causes, and a fight of afflictions, we should finally receive a glorious reward, a

perpetuity of unmixed felicity, in the regions of eternity.

But this desirable and excellent end is not to be effected by what is generally called Fate, the laws of necessity, or the arbitrary will, power, or decree, of the Author of our existence. God hath, in his wisdom, constituted us free and intelligent beings. He has endued us with faculties and powers capable of apprehending and practising those essential duties which he makes the condition of our final acceptance with him. He offers, but does not impose ; he graciously invites, but does not compel, us to accept of happiness. He shews us the spiritual Canaan, the land of the saints inheritance, in every generation : he gives us power to possess, but does not compel us to enter therein. Good and evil are clearly set before us, but our election is not constrained to either. The oeconomy of his moral government over rational beings is laid in divine wisdom and eternal righteousness. The great Sovereign of the universe

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is no respecter of persons ; for, of one blood hath he made all nations that dwell on the face of the earth. They stand in the same relation to the universal Father, Shepherd, and Bishop, of souls, who tenderly invites the whole race of mankind to come unto him that they may finally inherit the joy of his salvation. O unspeakable mercy ! unutterable theme ! It is sufficient to awaken the most glowing sensations of exalted and grateful praise to that God who is the salvation and glory of the righteous generations, *the rock of their strength, and their everlasting refuge.*

To this doctrine the holy apostle bore an ample and explicit testimony : *Of a truth, (said he,) I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but, in every nation, he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.*

Thus we find that it is the fear of the Lord, and an obedience to the law of righteousness, which are the terms alone by

which men can be saved. *If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die ; but, if ye, through the spirit, mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.*

This is a proposition of universal importance ; a proposition which relates to every individual in the vast community of mankind, however circumstanced, whether bond or free, rich or poor, or in whatever climate they reside.

All this may, indeed, be acknowledged both by those within and without the audience of my voice, who yet are in doubt *what they shall do to be saved* with an everlasting salvation. They want to be informed of the precise ideas that should be affixed to the conditions contained in the text ; although, perhaps, they readily apprehend that the terms *life* and *death* mean future happiness and misery.

I shall therefore attempt, according to the ability I am endued with at this season, to give you my thoughts on the important subject under consideration.

To

To live after the flesh is to live in the gratification of our animal appetites and passions beyond the bounds of reason, temperance, and sobriety. All the works of darkness, which, by the same apostle, are termed *deeds of the body*, all pride, wrath, envy, hatred, covetousness, with all the deceivableness of unrighteousness, are, in other words, *living after the flesh*. These things not only tend to the injury of peace and society, and are a bane to that happiness which is the result of genuine virtue even in this life ; not only introduce numerous errors into the animal and moral system, and aggravate the infirmities to which these bodies are incident, but render us unfit for those contemplations, and that supreme felicity, which are adapted to the dignity of rational and immortal spirits. God, in his wisdom, hath made man a little (and perhaps but a little) lower than the angels. He has endued him with a capacity for contemplating and adoring him, the source of uncreated excellence and perfection,

fection, and would crown him with superior honour, glory, and happiness, to what sensual gratifications can ever afford. Let us not then degrade ourselves beneath that rank we were designed to fill in creation, but remember our immortal descent, the cause of our being, and its end.

We have, indeed, bodies, and are imprisoned within elements, which excite within us numerous appetites, affections, and passions; but all these are to be gratified within certain bounds, in a degree proportioned to our exigences and necessities, of which the supreme intelligence has implanted a principle within us to judge.

This principle of intelligence, although called by a variety of names, and distinguished by various appellations, in the various professions amongst men, is one in nature, and universal amongst mankind. It is the spirit in man that giveth a right understanding: it is the light that (more or less) enlightens every man: it is the word of God in the heart, and the word of
faith

faith which the apostle preached to the Gentiles : it is the grace that hath appeared unto all men, teaching them to deny all ungodliness and the world's lusts, and to live righteously, soberly, and godly, in this present world : and, finally, it is the supreme reason, the law of truth and rectitude, the test of virtue and vice, which God himself hath placed in the hearts of all men ; and happy are those who hear and obey it in all things.

I would not be understood to mean that this principle, of which I am speaking, is designed to instruct us in all truths which the human mind may, in its own activity and wisdom, attempt to investigate ; or to give us a clear insight into those numerous speculative subjects, which have not only unprofitably employed mankind, and diverted their attention from things more substantial, but which have perplexed and divided them from generation to generation.

But,

But, by the exercise of this pure, holy, heavenly, principle, we may apprehend those truths which belong to us, and which have an essential relation to the prime end of our being. Of these truths the Father of Spirits has constituted man an adequate judge.

This is implied by the question which our Lord himself proposed to a people misled by the traditions of their fathers, and who had, through the neglect of this principle, taken for doctrine the commandments of men : *Yea, and why, even of yourselves, judge ye not what is right ?*

The obligation to all our social, relative, and religious, duties arises from the relations we stand in to our fellow-creatures and to God, the holy author of our existence. The general relation, which our fellow-creatures stand in to us, is that of brethren, children of the same universal parent, subject to the same necessities, and formed for the same unspeakably glorious and happy end. Hence it is our duty to exercise the
amiable

amiable virtues of love, forbearance, kindness, and charity, to all around us ; to seek their happiness, and lighten the weight of human misery to the utmost of our power.

There are, also, various accidental relations amongst mankind, as master, servant, father, governor, and numerous others ; all which have their correspondent duties.

The relation we stand in to the great Author of our being is that of children, which is one and immutable at all times. A life, agreeable to that relation we stand in to the Lord Almighty, is that of filial fear. Obedience and worship are our indispensable duty to him ; and the rules of justice, charity, and brotherly kindness, are indispensable obligations on us to the rest of mankind.

Thus far, perhaps, the persons, whom I immediately address at this time, may concur with me in sentiment : but they, as well as myself, are perhaps conscious of having failed in numerous instances of discharging

charging their religious duties to God, and their social duties one to another.

We have all sinned, and fallen short of the glory of God. We have multiplied our transgressions without number, and our manifold iniquities rise before us as a thick cloud, obscuring the brightness of that Sun of eternal Righteousness, which would otherwise illuminate our understandings with its marvellous lights. *Who, therefore, (says the humiliated penitent soul,) shall deliver us from the body of this death? Who shall take from us the weight of our sins, under which we groan incessantly? Who shall deliver us from the wrath to come? Men and brethren, what shall we do to be saved?*

The conditions of our redemption, and reconciliation with the gracious Father of us all, are clearly expressed in the oracles of sacred truth. The placability of the divine nature is repeatedly asserted. He, with whom dwells wisdom, justice, righteousness, and strength, is also represented to us in the glorious adorable character of a God

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of mercy, long-suffering, and never-failing kindness; as a Being ready to blot out our transgressions from the celestial register on our sincere repentance, and to remember them no more. He will restore unto the humble penitent the joy of his salvation: he will guide him by his counsel, and afterwards receive him into glory.

This important and interesting doctrine was typified under the law, spoken of by the prophets, and gloriously asserted by the Son of God, who is our mediator with the Father, and the hope of all the righteous generations. In his character was displayed to mankind, in the most eminent and striking manner, the provident care, mercy, and goodness, of God towards his whole rational creation. Like sheep they have gone astray from the universal Shepherd and Bishop of souls. They have revolted from his government, and widely wandered from the path of purity and holiness, which is also the path of pleasantness and peace; that path of moral rectitude and truth, that
bright

bright and shining light, which (like the luminous orb after it arises in our hemisphere) shines with increasing refulgence and splendor till it arrive at the meridian altitude of glorious perfect day. The light, which shines from heaven on the understandings of men, will lead all those, who pursue its direction, by degrees of experience, through the wilderness of this world in perfect safety : it will bring them, when the days of their warfare are accomplished, to the grand end of their creation, — to that complete fruition of bliss, which is figuratively represented to us by a city that has foundations; whose builder and maker is God ; a city, whose walls are salvation, and whose gates are eternal praise ; a city, that has no need of the elementary light of the sun, moon, or stars ; for, the Lord God and the Lamb are the light thereof : a city, where God reigneth triumphantly amongst his saints, and is to them an inexhaustible fountain of joy, light, and felicity, for ever. There the weary tribulated

ted pilgrim finds an end of all his anxiety and labour ; the days of his mourning are ended, and he receives the reward of his faith and patience, the fruition of his hopes, even the eternal salvation of his soul.

The important message which Christ, the glorious high-priest of the Christian religion, had in commission from his and our Father, from his and our God, was, that he compassionated his creatures, incompassed with the distresses that their sins had brought upon them, — that he willed not their everlasting separation from him, the source of happiness, but that he was willing they should be reconciled to him. For this end, he called upon them to *repent and be converted*, that their sins might be forgiven them, and that they might finally enter into his rest.

This was the interesting doctrine which the Saviour of the world promulgated, and happy are those who hear and obey it!

Repent, and be converted, that your sins may be forgiven you. It is not the assent of the

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lip,

lip, and of the tongue, to the glorious truths of the gospel ; it is not the splendid formality of high profession ; it is not crying Lord, Lord ! in the hour of strong conviction ; but it is a surrender of the will and affections, a renovation of the heart and conformity to the divine image, which can alone gain us an admittance into the New Jerusalem, the city of God.

If we make an impartial survey of our past lives, review our frequent revoltings, and compare our conduct with the convictions we have received of right and wrong, virtue and vice, there is scarcely a soul present but must feel some degree of remorse, some degree of repentance, for the turpitude of his morals, and his want of love, obedience, and gratitude, to so gracious a Father, who has encompassed us with blessings, and preserved us, by his providence, from the earliest period of our lives to the present hour. On these solemn reflections we must (I say again) witness some degree of repentance ;

repentance ; but, unhappily for us, the impressions that are made on our minds, on a serious review of our actions, are soon cancelled, soon effaced, by the influence which a variety of creaturely objects are suffered to make upon us, and, like the early dew, they soon pass away : *Of the rock that begat them they have been unmindful.* Cleansed, in some degree, as we are by the waters of contrition, we again become defiled by a repetition of that iniquity, which, in the moments of our humiliation, we had determined to renounce and forsake. We are again caught in the snare of our lusts, and captivated by objects which have a tendency to alienate our affections from the one adorable Object, the source of our safety and felicity, the only permanent and supreme good. What is to be done in the fatal dilemma to which our inconstancy to our virtuous resolutions has reduced us ? Shall we despair of the divine mercy, which we have so often abused ; of that goodness we have so long trifled with ? or, fear that our

future endeavours will be vain, and that, for our multiplied transgressions, we shall be made *a desolation for ever* ! God forbid ! Let us rather, in the depths of self-abasement, prostrate our souls at the throne of grace, and humbly implore the continued mercy of the universal Parent. Let us beg for strength and holy ability to withstand succeeding temptations, and run the ways of his commandments with delight.

As a father pitieth his children, so he pitieth those who fear him, and, in immortal kindness, will bring them to the joy of his salvation. He knoweth our frame, and remembereth that we are but dust. Although he hideth his face for a moment, yet with everlasting kindness will he remember Zion ; for, *her maker is her husband, the Lord of Hosts is his name*. Let us therefore beseech him, in the fervency of prayer, to send forth help from his holy sanctuary, and strengthen us to renew and keep our covenants with him to the end of our days.

Let

Let us refrain from the commission of evil, and wait on him in the silence of all flesh, that the Fountain of light and truth may again enlighten us to see ourselves as we are seen of him, and inflame our hearts with that celestial fire which purgeth away the intellectual filth and dross that prevent the ascent of the soul God-ward, and render it an unfit habitation for his holiness to dwell in. As our own backslidings have frequently corrected us, and covered our minds with anxiety, let our future conduct, directed by his grace, atone for what is past, and, by a conversation ordered aright, let us *glorify our Father who is in heaven.*

I feel, at this season, the influence (in degree) of that celestial charity which breathes through Immanuel to the whole creation of God, and wisheth salvation to every soul that inhabits the earth. In that I intreat you, as a being subject to the same infirmities which you sometimes unavailably deplore, *Repent, and be converted.* Repentance you have frequently experienced, but

too little, I fear, of that essential conversion which the gospel of Jesus proposes. It is highly probable that some persons present have seen the necessity of that renovation of heart, and reformation of manners, intended by conversion ; and yet, urged by the powerful prevalence of their lusts and of self-love, are seeking, if possible, to find some other remedy for a wounded conscience than that which the simplicity of the gospel requires as a necessary prelude to the favour of God. They are enquiring *What shall we do to be saved ?* and, like the young man in the gospel, they have been animated with a desire to be inrolled among the disciples of Jesus, who are called heirs of God, and co-heirs with Christ, of that inheritance which is incorruptible and full of glory. They have asked counsel of the wonderful Counsellor, and addressed him with the important question, *What good thing shall I do that I may inherit eternal life ?* yet, when the unchangeable terms of salvation have been proposed ; when they have been

been told they must part with all their idols, they have gone away sorrowful : the terms have appeared too hard for them to comply with ; and, like the king who wanted to be cured of his leprosy, and was staggered at the thought of taking so long a journey as the prophet had directed, are crying out, *Are not Abana and Pharphar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel ?* will not their waters cleanse me from my impurity ?

Thus, numbers among mankind are striving to elude those measures which the gospel of Jesus enjoins, and are substituting others in their stead, which are better adapted to soothe the carnal mind, and prevent that mortification of the deeds of the body which human nature shrinks from with horror. Man is desirous to possess the crown of eternal life, but not willing to bear the cross. He would indeed reign with Christ, but not suffer with him. He would accompany him to the mount of transfiguration, but not to Golgotha. He would be

his attendant at his glorification, but not in the awful scenes of his humiliation.

Divers have wandered as from mountain to mountain and from hill to hill, seeking for the living in the sepulchres of the dead. They have sometimes adopted one creed, and sometimes another,—practised external ordinances, and complied with empty forms; addressing themselves frequently to guides, as blind and impotent as themselves, with this awful query, *Men and brethren, what shall we do to be saved?*

I say again, repent, and be converted; for, this is the only way to find salvation to your souls. No external ceremonies, no verbal confessions, no change of opinions merely, can accomplish this repentance and conversion, and afford you the consequent rewards of a glorious immortality. This important work of salvation cannot be effected in man's time, will, activity, or wisdom, but is wrought in him by the powerful operation of the Holy Ghost, which is as a consuming fire to the adversa-

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ry, to the adverse part of man, to the corrupt will, which would not that Christ should reign in his kingdom, and that God should be all in all.

It is the baptism of fire, of which John's was but a type, which, discriminating the pure from the impure, gathers the wheat into the garner, but consumes the chaff with unquenchable burnings.

In the world there are many voices which correspond not with the voice of Christ, the only Shepherd and Bishop of souls, whom we ought to hear and obey in all things, but which are the voices of those who *teach for hire, and divine for money: who look for their gain from their quarters,* and are ready to make war against conscientious men, who cannot put into their mouths. These have found it their worldly interest to lead the deluded people from, rather than to, Christ, the glorious high-priest, the life and light of men. They have attempted to render that mysterious which the Holy Ghost has left clear, and to perplex

perplex the understandings of men with vain metaphysical speculations, without making them either wiser or better. This class of men, whose *God is their belly, whose glory is their shame*, have indeed proved *physicians of no value*.

Many have enquired of these, *What shall we do to be saved?* but they, not having experienced the work of salvation in themselves, are incapable to instruct others in the way that leads to eternal life. Instead of laying the axe to the root of the corrupt tree, they have only attempted to lop off some of its branches, and rescind some of its most palpable excrescences. They have been crying, Peace, peace ! when the alarm of danger should have sounded in the ears of the people. They have prescribed emollients where the most searching operation was expedient ; and, healing the wound of the daughter of Zion deceitfully, have lulled multitudes into a fatal security, by flattering them with hopes, which, it is to be

be feared, will end in confusion and disappointment, and perish for ever.

There are others who assume the office of ministers, the purity of whose intentions charity forbids me to dispute; who, like a man that attempts to answer a question before he has fully heard it, have too precipitately embarked in the important work of instructing souls in the great things of salvation. These are, like Ephraim, *a cake not turned*; are not yet instructed in the way of the Lord perfectly, and, whilst they are teaching others, had need themselves, to be taught what are the first principles of the oracles of God. The coal from the holy altar has not yet been applied to their lips, and they have been ministering, by the law of a carnal commandment, without being endued with the power of an endless life. They have run on the Lord's errand unsent, and have not essentially profited the people. They have taken upon them to guide those who are inquiring *what shall we do to be saved*, and have led

led them indeed from the confines of Egypt, but leave them, undirected to the spiritual Moses, to wander in uncertainty, and to compass a mountain of doubts in the wilderness.

May the Lord Almighty, in his infinite mercy, gather these who are wandering as sheep without a shepherd, and lead them into the sacred inclosures of his fold of eternal rest and safety !

May the nations of them that have sat in darkness be again enlightened by the glorious breaking forth of the Sun of righteousness in their hearts, that our Zion may yet become an eternal excellency, and the joy of many generations !

Let it not be thought, by any thing I have said, that I look upon all, who appear girded with the linen ephod of other Christian societies, either as impostors, or the deluded votaries of Antichrist. I freely declare I doubt not but many of them have had a dispensation of the gospel committed to them ; and, although they may be bi-
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affed by the prejudice of education and the traditions of their fathers, yet the root of the matter seems to be in them. I esteem these, in whatever society they are found, and in whatever vestments they are clothed, as my brethren in the fellowship of the everlasting gospel of Christ. Yet I cannot direct the searcher after truth, who is pensively inquiring *What he shall do to be saved*, to the ministry of any man ; but would rather recommend him to the immediate teaching of the word nigh in the heart, even the spirit of God. This is the only infallible teacher, and the primary adequate rule of faith and manners, and will lead those who attend to its dictates into the peaceable paths of safety and of truth. Let the earnest humble petition of your souls be, to the Father of sure mercies, *Lead me by thy counsel, and afterwards receive me into glory* : let thy rod and thy staff support me, through the uncertainties of time, to a happy conclusion in thy favour. Ye need not, saith the apostle to the church formerly,

formerly, that any man teach you, save as this anointing teacheth, which is truth, and no lie. Cease, therefore, from man, whose breath is in his nostrils, and whose existence is but as a vapour ; for, wherein is he to be accounted of ? As a fallible being he is subject to frequent deception, and is therefore liable to deceive ; but the spirit of God can neither be deceived, nor will it deceive any soul that submits to its holy government, and obeys its dictates. In this is our safety and strength, and the hope of our eternal reward, when our weary pilgrimage shall come to an end.

O ye penitent prodigals, my soul earnestly longs for your restoration to the mercy and favour of God !

Ye, who are reduced, by your wanderings in the wilderness of this world, to a state of extreme poverty, to the want of that bread which comes down from the celestial regions, and which can alone nourish the soul up to eternal life ; — ye, who have long been attempting to satisfy the cravings of an immortal

mortal spirit with the husks and shells of an empty profession of religion, look towards your Father, from whom you have revolted. Remember that in his house there is bread enough, and to spare: there your souls may be richly replenished with enduring substance. Return, O house of Israel, from your backslidings, and seek the face of your everlasting Father and Friend! In unspeakable kindness he hath declared that he will be found of those who seek him in sincerity of heart; and that as many as knock at his gate for an entrance shall be admitted to his presence, and receive the remission of their sins. O unspeakable condescension! unutterable love! Though gloriously exalted above the heaven of heavens, and placed at the summit of all perfection, yet his gracious regard is to the sons of men, and he is *beautifying the place of his feet*.

The humble address which the prodigal made to his father, the return that he met with, and the manner of his reception into
favour,

favour, are exceedingly expressive of the becoming penitence of the one, and the mercy and benignity of the other. *I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no longer worthy to be called thy son; make me therefore as one of thy hired servants.* The injured neglected parent compassionates his distress, takes the prodigal in his arms, owns him for his son, orders the fatted calf to be killed, and rebukes the envy of his elder brother with *this my son is dead, but he is alive again; he was lost, but is found.* O the height and depth of the goodness and mercy of God! Look unto him, ye ends of the earth, and be saved!

Before I conclude, I find it in mine heart to address another class in this meeting: a class who have earnestly fought, and happily found, him of whom Moses and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the Immanuel, which, being interpreted, is, God with us. You, who once were scattered as sheep without a shepherd on the barren mountains and desolate hills of an empty profession, the great
Shepherd

Shepherd of souls hath gathered within the sacred inclosures of his fold, and you are under the peculiar protection of the Lord Almighty. He hath plucked you as brands out of the burning, and redeemed you to himself with the saving strength of his right arm. When the blackness of darkness surrounded your dwellings; when the terror of his judgements encompassed you for disobedience, by his light you walked through the region and valley of the shadow of death. Although for a moment he turned his face from you, yet, in everlasting kindness, hath he gathered you from the world to himself. Oh! may you ever remember his unutterable mercy, and dedicate the remainder of your days to the honour of his name.

My spirit salutes you, in the endeared affection of the gospel of peace, as fellow-travellers towards the land of eternal rest, and wishes your establishment in righteousness for ever;—that you may abide in holy patience the fiery trial of faith through-

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out the days of your earthly pilgrimage, and become as fixed pillars in the celestial building and house of God.

If you stedfastly abide in the word of faith, wherein you have been taught, neither the malice of men, nor the united powers of darkness, shall be able to pluck you out of the hands of him who is your judge, your king, your protector, your father, and everlasting friend. *As a garden inclosed* has he made you, in safe dwellings has he appointed your lots, and, in the end of days, he will be your refuge for ever. When this earth shall be wrapped together like a scroll, and the sun and moon be darkened; when every glorious constellation of the heavens shall sink into everlasting obscurity, and the elements of this world shall be dissolved with fervent heat; you will possess a habitation within the superior regions of a new heaven and a new earth, where the Lord your righteousness dwells.

Many of the pretended wise, learned, and prudent, of this world, who have sought

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to climb up some other way rather than enter by Christ, who is the door into the sheepfold, may pity you as fools, or ridicule you as enthusiasts; they may account your life madness, and your end without honour; but they will one day be astonished at the strangeness of your salvation, when they may see, to their confusion, that you are finally numbered among the children of God, and your inheritance is among the saints.

In the world you are to expect tribulations of various kinds, sickness, disease, and pain: temptations and disappointments invade the breasts of the most temperate, virtuous, and religious, among men. A cup of mixture, more or less impregnated with the wormwood and the gall, is the lot of humanity, designed doubtless to effect a valuable purpose by him who afflicts not willingly, nor without a righteous and benevolent cause, the children of men.

As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are the ways of the Almighty than our ways, and his thoughts than our thoughts.

We see a little, and but a very little, of the amazing universal plan of his government over rational and immortal spirits. It lies beyond the reach of the most exalted created faculties to comprehend his wisdom throughout the righteous administration of his providence, which is unsearchable. It is our duty, as frail, dependent, and impotent, beings, to meet every dispensation with that resignation of spirit which incessantly breathes the humble language of *Not my will, O Lord, but thine, be done in all things*. Though the times are gloomy, the out-goings of the morning are of God. He will yet comfort the waste places of Zion, and build up her desolations. He will make her wilderness as Eden, and her deserts as the garden of the Lord: joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of melody. Awake, therefore,

fore, and put on strength, ye who have *lien amongst the pots*; ye, who have been afflicted, tossed with tempests, and not comforted; for, the hour of your salvation is near. Abide in holy patience, and hope to the end. It is our duty, under the evils which we feel, and which our prudence could not prevent, to implore divine aid to endure them with patience, rather than to pray that they may be removed from us; lest, like ignorant children, we should seek to avoid that potion, from our heavenly Father's hand, which is graciously designed to remove, or prevent, a greater evil. This is not the place of your rest, but a state of probation, a painful pilgrimage, a land of pits and of snares, through which lies a narrow path to the regions of eternal peace. The soul, by reason of its connection with the body, and while inclosed within the walls of flesh, cannot extend its views, and employ its faculties, on divine objects without frequent interruption. But, when the days of its captivity are accomplished, it

will be capable of a more glorious expansion in the kingdom of light and immortality, and possess that joy which is unspeakable and full of glory. Therefore, in all the calamities to which we are subject in the house of our pilgrimage, we have a place of refuge to flee to, where safety is alone to be found. Though, indeed, we must feel in some degree as men, yet we may possess the patience, resignation, and holy fortitude, of Christians, who are looking for a better country, a more excellent inheritance, in that city whose inhabitants have no occasion to complain that they are sick.

Be ye, therefore, stedfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour shall not be in vain. Be ye, in your several stations in the church and in the world, as way-marks to the honest sincere inquirers, who are asking the way to Zion, and, from a true sense of their condition, are crying out, *What shall we do to be saved?* Shew forth, by your example of charity, sobriety,

briety, temperance, and holiness of life, that you are redeemed from the spirit of the world that lies in wickedness. Be not captivated by its trifling amusements, nor ensnared by its lying vanities, but retain the fear of God, which will keep the heart clean, and prove a source of surest consolation when all things else will be unavailing. Let the purity of your lives demonstrate that you are attentive to things more excellent, and have placed your affections on things permanent and eternal; things which essentially relate to the salvation of the soul.

Thus, you will be a means of leading others in the way of truth and righteousness, and become the consecrated temples of the Holy Ghost. You will witness an increase of strength, wisdom, and holy stability, from day to day, and perseverance in the way that is everlasting.

Finally, my brethren, farewell. I commend you to God, the great Shepherd of Israel, and to the word of his grace, as the only

infallible guide to direct you *What ye shall do to be saved.* It is able to build you up in the most holy faith, to direct your feet in the paths of righteousness and peace, and, finally, to put you in possession of a glorious inheritance, among the saints, that will never fade away !

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE II.

THEN *Jesus said to his disciples, a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven ; and again I say unto you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, who then can be saved ?* It is no wonder, indeed, that these appeared to them to be *hard sayings*, and that they should excite their astonishment, if they apprehended by them, that the kingdom of heaven was only open to poverty and wretchedness. It appears, I think, beyond controversy,

controversy, that, notwithstanding the disciples attended to the doctrine of such an excellent minister, who spoke with peculiar authority, yet they did not at once comprehend the whole of his doctrine and works. Their understandings were gradually opened and informed: they were led on step by step. The work of religion was not with them, as some people have imagined the work of religion to be, an instantaneous work: they went on from strength to strength, and from one degree of knowledge to another, till they had acquired as much as was necessary for them. They were not instructed in all truths, but in such as respected the duties of their day and of their station, and which, in the course of their pilgrimage in this world, filled them with a humble hope and expectation of ultimately entering into one that is infinitely better, there to partake of the joy of their Lord, and of that rest from their labours which is prepared for the people of God. Thus, we find, when they
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were told that *they must eat his flesh, and drink his blood*, — that it was necessary a man should *bate his father and mother, his wife, his children, and even his own life*,—accepting these texts, at first, in a strict and literal sense, it is no wonder they should think them *hard sayings* : hard indeed it would be if it were necessary that the affections, which flow from consanguinity and affinity, must be totally eradicated, and the malignant passion of hatred be substituted, in order to render us successful candidates for an inheritance that is incorruptible and that fadeth not away.

But it is clear to me, beyond the least doubt, that our Lord designed, throughout the whole of his ministry, to excite and to strengthen, instead of weakening, those bands by which society is held together.

He designed to inspire us with the most friendly affections, as the main, or principal, motive to the discharge of the various social and relative duties : this appears to me to be comprehended in the second commandment,

mandment, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*. With respect to this particular passage of the New Testament, it may, perhaps, be profitable, at least to the younger part of this assembly, whose experience has not yet been much, and whose observations have been but transient, to advert a little to the occasion of these *hard sayings*, which excited the amazement of the disciples.

It seems there was a young man who had heard of the fame of Jesus; who wanted to be instructed with respect to what measures were necessary for him to adopt and to pursue in order to inherit everlasting life. Urged by this desire, he makes an application unto Jesus, addressing him after this manner, *Good master, what good thing shall I do, that I may inherit eternal life?* Our saviour enumerated several of the commandments, to which he replied, and no doubt with the greatest degree of sincerity, *All these have I kept from my youth up, what lack I yet?* It appears that our Lord meant to bring his love and his virtue to a severe test.

test. *One thing, says he, thou lackest; if thou wilt be perfect, sell that thou hast, and give to the poor; take up thy cross, and follow me, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven.*

It seems that our Saviour struck at his darling passion, the love of money; for, upon hearing this proposal, it is evident that he preferred, at that time, retaining his corporeal possessions, that present temporary good, to the future and remote one of eternal life, for, *he went away sorrowful.*

Then Jesus said to his disciples, *A rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.* It must, indeed, be acknowledged, that, seeing we have nothing which we have not received, — that we are not proprietors of the inheritance which we possess, but tenants only at will; for, *the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof, and the cattle on a thousand hills,* — we ought to relinquish, to give up, a part, or the whole, of that which is lent us, when it is the will of the giver to make that requisition; but it is evident to me, that this particular
requisition

requisition intends not a general command. I conceive, that it is not riches, merely as riches, which can prevent our entrance into the kingdom of heaven. It may be said, with equal truth, that *it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a poor man to enter into the kingdom of heaven*, if he have nothing but poverty and wretchedness to recommend him. It is very evident, from divers circumstances, that our Lord's controversy was not with riches, but the spirit of pride, which too frequently possesses the hearts of the rich; for, we have an account of a rich, and yet of a good, man, Joseph of Arimathea. From the several accounts of the evangelists it appears he was an honourable counsellor, a rich man, a good, a just, man, a disciple of Jesus, and one that *waited for the kingdom of God*, though it was probable that he was a member of the Sanhedrim.

It seems to me that the rich man, designed in this text, is such a man as is represented to us in the parable: *There was a certain*

certain rich man, who was clothed with purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day : there was also a certain beggar, that was laid at his gate, full of sores, of whom there can be no doubt that he was a proper object of human sympathy. He was laid at his gate full of sores : his requisition was humble, desiring to be fed only with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table ; moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores. It came to pass that the beggar died, and that he was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom : the rich man also died, and was buried ; and he lifted up his eyes in hell, and saw Lazarus in Abraham's bosom. He cried out, in a sort of agony, Father Abraham, have mercy upon me, and send Lazarus that he may dip his finger in water to cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame : but Abraham answered, Son, remember, that thou, in thy lifetime, receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things ; but now, he is comforted, and thou art tormented. But we are not to infer from this text, that, merely his being

clothed

clothed in purple and fine linen, or faring sumptuously, was the cause of his consequent misery ; or, that it followed of course, having received the good things of this life, he should suffer the worst of evils in the next ; but it appears he wanted that brotherly sympathy, that friendly affection, recommended to us in the character of the good Samaritan, which is not restricted to any peculiar class, but directed to every object of distress. There was a man, who, travelling from Jerusalem to Jericho, fell among thieves : he was spoiled, he was wounded.—The priest passed by,—he who attended at the altar of God, he that should have possessed a spirit of universal charity. The priest passed by,—the Levite followed his example, untouched with the feelings of humanity ; his heart was contracted, perhaps, by the prejudices of a party, which he had conceived to be religion. But a Samaritan passed that way : he looked upon the man with that sympathy and compassion which the love of Christ inspires towards

wards a brother in distress, incapable of relieving himself, upon whom many sufferings were brought, and many more expected to follow. He takes compassion of this poor Jew, pours oil and wine into his wounds, attempts to alleviate his grief by lessening its cause; and, though he could have no expectation of compensation, yet it did not restrain him from attempting every thing in his power for the relief of this indigent person, and his views were not confined to the present time; he looked forward, and endeavoured to provide for his future well-being, giving a direction unto his host, *I will repay thee*. It was therefore the want of this sympathy, together with the spirit of pride, which prompted the rich man to pursue the lusts of the flesh, of the eye, and the pride of life, at the expence of his social and religious duties, which rendered him highly criminal. This appears clearly to have been designed: the character of this *certain rich man* and that of the beggar formed a contrast. The rich

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man wanted virtue ; the poor man was destitute of food ; it is evident, however, that he was in a humble state. What could he have asked less if he had asked any thing ? The severity of hunger forced him to ask thus much of him, as he was incapable of helping himself. He desired only the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table, but he was unnoticed. If he had been of the rich, if there had been a prospect that the interest, or the pleasure, of the rich man could have been augmented by relieving him, he would have noticed him as Laban did Abraham's servant when he saw the bracelets on his sister's hands, *Come in, thou blessed of the Lord, wherefore standest thou without ?* the door would have been readily opened to opulence, and titular dignity would have found an easy access ; but the poor beggar lay unnoticed : the inferior species of animals seemed to feel more sympathy than the rich man, *Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.* I would not be understood, by any thing that I have said,

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to attempt an ingenious apology for the rich; but, at the same time, I would attempt to make that distinction between the poverty of the heart and the possessions of the hands which the author of the Christian religion designed. In the course of the providence of Almighty God it so falleth out, that the efforts of the laborious and industrious are not crowned with equal success. But we are not to conclude that the person, whose barns are filled with plenty, and whose presses are ready to burst *with new wine*, is the distinguished favourite of heaven, any more than that the poor man, who divides his morsel with his family, and mixes his tears with his bread, is reprobated by heaven. It is the abuse, and not the use, of riches which the testimony of Christ is certainly against. The apostles did not enjoin the rich to throw away their riches, but he exhorts Timothy to *charge them, who are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, that they assume nothing on the score of their possessions; charge the*

rich of this world that they be not high-minded, neither trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us all things richly to enjoy. This is what he had in charge, adding, I think, that we brought nothing with us into the world, and we shall carry nothing out of it. Naked we came into the world, naked we shall return, be dissolved and mixed with those elements, from which we originally sprang. I would, therefore, attempt, at least, that we should individually reflect upon the circumstances that we are placed in, and that we should receive with gratitude the portion which, in the general course of God's providence, shall be allotted to us. Nothing more is required of us than to be good stewards of the manifold grace of God. We are called stewards; and a time approaches, with unavoidable certainty, when the Lord of the universe will call us, will summon us hence, with give thou an account of thy stewardship, for thou shalt be no longer steward. Let us therefore consider the several talents we have received for the improvement

provement of our hearts in the Christian
 life : let us consider the outward benefits
 that are bestowed upon us, and let it be
 the study of our lives to apply them pro-
 perly, and to resemble the good Samaritan ;
 that, in imitating the example of the author
 of the Christian religion, it may be the de-
 light of our lives to diffuse happiness all a-
 round, and to go *about doing good*. This
 appears to be of indispensable obligation.
 If the rich man had possessed this friendly
 disposition, the beggar would not have
 been neglected at the gates of his house, the
 dogs would not have been suffered to lick
 his sores ; he would have poured into them
 lenient balm ; he would have attempted to
 bind up his broken heart, and to *wipe away*
all tears from all faces, to diffuse happiness
 in as extensive a manner as his abilities
 could qualify him to diffuse it, and therein
 he would have been the best prepared to
 join the heavenly society above, when a pe-
 riod should have been put to his existence
 upon earth, and his possessions could no

longer avail him. But this was not the circumstance of the rich man ; he wanted *bowels of compassion* ; and, therefore, whatever religious party he was connected with, whether of the Pharisees or of the Sadducees, he was not acceptable in the sight of the Searcher of hearts. Let us now reflect a little on what his feelings must be,—the feelings of a man that has rolled along in pomp, that has been clad in *purple and fine linen*, that has had his *singing men* and his *singing women*, with the sound of the pipe and of the tabret, to attune his heart to joy, yet destitute of the feelings of humanity and of worthy sentiments of religion. Death approaches,—he sees the *heavens passing away as a scroll*, and the very foundation of his happiness dissolved. I cannot better express it than in the language of the holy scriptures : *When in his prosperity, the destroyer came upon him ; his purposes were cut off, even the thoughts of his heart and the desire of his eyes ; but his day is turned into night, his light into darkness ; his harp is turned into mourning,*

mourning, and his organ into the voice of them that weep. He is about to quit this scene of things without any hope or expectation of entering upon any scene that is better. He looks back upon a life that has been spent in various species of dissipation, in the gratification of his sensual appetites, and in the neglect of every social duty. He now finds himself in a circumstance far beneath the poor beggar's that lay at his gate.—Conscience resumes the seat she had lost,—wounds that had been healed break out afresh, and bleed anguish. He looks back, but it gives him no pleasure; the picture excites the most painful feelings. He looks forward, but he has no hope; his *singing men* and his *singing women*, with the voice of the pipe and the tabret, can no more inspire his soul with joy. He is about to quit this mortal stage, and to enter into the world of spirits, but destitute of those moral virtues that would have qualified him to join the celestial society, and to take a part in the general festivity which

prevails throughout heaven's empire. The rich man lifted up his eyes to heaven in a state of anguish ; he beheld the beggar in Abraham's bosom. We are not to consider this text literally : this is a parable, not a matter of fact ; and a parable designed to illustrate the moral doctrine of the gospel of Christ. He reaped the fruit of his doings, that which will inevitably follow a course of dissipation and a neglect of our proper duties : *The recompence of his hands will be rendered to every man. To those, who obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil : of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile ; for, there is no respect of persons with God :* and I wish to God there were less respect of persons with men. This was the circumstance, as I conceive, of the rich man.—Let us now consider what might be the feelings and the hopes of the poor beggar. Despised of his brethren, unpitied, unrelieved, he lay at the gates of the rich man ;
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the dogs licked his wounds :—he importuned charity, — but he importuned in vain. The rich man's ear was deaf to his prayers. What consolation could he have in this state ! Indeed, his feelings must have been exquisite. Hunger and thirst are appetites, which, in the extreme, throw the mind into tumult. His natural feelings were painful, but what were his prospects ! What were his hopes ! Though he was poor, he was not forsaken of his Maker : he could not boast of *purple and fine linen*, he attended not the tables of the rich, nor partook of their luxurious banquets, yet he was the offspring of the eternal Father, who made of *one blood all the nations of men who dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the bounds of their habitation*. If the earth was unpropitious to his prayers, still heaven was open to his cries. The Sovereign of the universe, who regards the *crying of the poor and the supplication of the needy*, took compassion on the poor beggar. He was about to quit his rags, to quit his poverty,

verty, and to enter into a state of everlasting happiness,—he was *carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom*. Which of those circumstances was the most desirable ! Let us extend our views beyond the present scene of things : let us anticipate the shock we cannot shun. Which would you rather sustain, the character of this poor beggar, or the character of *this certain rich man* ? Would you lose the hopes of the beggar in order to sustain the dignity of the rich man ? This, methinks, is a question which common sense would not be long in deciding upon ; but, such is the weakness and frailty of our nature, that we approve the right, and yet pursue the wrong : we do the thing that we would not, and neglect that which we would, do. The passions of human nature are exceedingly strong, and there is some one that generally characterises every person ; a kind of reigning passion, which like Aaron's rod, swallows up all the rest. We are not all pursuing one path of vanity, for its paths are endless ; but we have an aptitude,

aptitude, we have a promptness, rather to pursue measures that may produce a temporal good than those which will produce a spiritual good. The gratification of the present moment engages our passions. If we were to form an idea by the general practice of mankind, we seem to forget that we are mortal, and that we must die. Mankind busy themselves often beside their proper business; and, whilst they are enlarging the boundaries of their earthly inheritance, are but little solicitous to obtain a habitation in the *new heavens and in the new earth, wherein righteousness dwells*. They prefer present to everlasting good, and neglect to cultivate those virtues which would make them resemble the Deity, (if I may be allowed the expression,) expand the faculties of the soul, and make it more capable of those sublime contemplations which are the employment of the celestial choir. I wish, therefore, that we might be induced to reflect on the vanity of human wishes, and on the folly of human pursuits. We have

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no continuing city here : perfect felicity is no more to be found in this mutable state of things than it was practicable for the Babel builders to erect an edifice that should reach the heavens. Many have soared aloft, and built their nests on high, as upon the cedar of Lebanon, yet they have been brought down. Death levels all distinctions, and earthly possessions make no difference in the grave : let us set our affections therefore upon things that are above, and not on things which are beneath. If our affections be placed upon the superior good, we shall feel gradually a less attachment to things that are seen ; — less to this world, the fashion whereof is passing away, and we are passing away with it. Its pleasures are but as a cloud, or a vapour, which will soon disappear. We are hastening to the place of our destination, let us therefore *run with patience the race that is set before us*, imitating the example of the wise and virtuous of all generations, endeavouring to fulfil the various obligations that we are
under

under to the Author of our being and one to another ;—to adopt the phrase in the parable, that we *may be carried by angels into Abraham's bosom*, and enter into the fulness of that joy of which we have here but a foretaste, as of the *brook that is by the way*.

Perhaps some present, in the hours of their solitude, may reflect, that they pass unnoticed amidst the throng, while others sustain the plaudit of the people. Let them consider, that, in a few days, there will be an end put to their anxieties: if they be virtuous, indeed, they are destined for the regions of glory, immortality, and eternal life,—regions of which we can at present form no adequate idea. We see but *darkly, as through a glass*,—we explore but a little of that vast plan of the providential government of the supreme Being ; yet, in a future state, with faculties better disposed, with minds properly prepared, it may be a part of our employment to investigate the dispensations of divine providence, which at present appear exceedingly mysterious ;

mysterious;—to celebrate, in a future world, the wonderful display of wisdom and power in the constitution of this, and also the goodness of God in adapting all his dispensations to all his people for the accomplishment of their supreme good ; and, from a principle of conviction, to join the heavenly host in saying, *Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty: just and true are all thy ways, thou King of saints.* I am encouraged to expect this from the saying of Christ, that *what I do, thou knowest not now, but shalt know hereafter* ; therefore, let not the poor be disconsolate in their habitations of poverty, but let them attempt, in their respective stations, to fill up the duties of their day, and they shall end in peace everlasting. I intend not by what I have said that I have any person in view who is wanting in charity and benevolence ; by no means: my design is general. I commend that good and virtuous disposition which has been apparent in many whom I am addressing ; and I wish they may persevere in that

that which is right, and that they may endeavour to lay up for themselves a good foundation against the time to come. Riches are attended with many snares, and so is poverty: that poverty, which brings a man to want the necessaries of life, will require uncommon fortitude and patience to bear. There are indeed snares in every state. Every state is a state of probation, and there are temptations excited in our minds which correspond with the state and circumstances that we are in, and to the several biases that we possess. Let us therefore lay aside every weight and burden, and the sin which easily besets us, and run with patience the race that is set before us, cherishing, in the first instance, a sincere love of the supreme Being in the highest degree, and then the love of our neighbour as ourselves, that we may possess a spirit of universal benevolence, which will prompt us to do all the good we can to that family of which the Lord God Almighty is the Father and Head. I conceive, indeed, that religion and virtue allow

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of degrees in love. There are peculiar attachments which arise from consanguinity, and also from affinity, which religion has no controversies with. We read, in the character of our Lord, that, notwithstanding he possessed a *love of all* his disciples, and of all the inhabitants of the earth, yet John seemed to be distinguished : *he leaned upon his bosom*, he was the disciple whom Jesus loved ; but we are not hence to conclude that he loved no other ; but there was a peculiar attachment to the *disciple whom Jesus loved*.

I would recommend, in attempting every step of reformation, and in every good word and work, that we attend to, and wait for, the influence of the holy Spirit ; that which would sanctify us, that which would gradually inform our understandings, remove our prejudices and our doubts, inspire us with the most substantial hopes, and open to us prospects that are the most pleasing ; and, whatever portion of ill may be allotted us in the course of divine providence, let the virtuous ever bear

bear in remembrance that *there is a river, the streams whereof make glad the heritage of God*; and every sincere devoted soul, of every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, that fears God and works righteousness, is part of this heritage, which is replenished with the showers of immortal goodness, and is as a *garden inclosed*, notwithstanding the different circumstance of individuals. The whole of this heritage is inclosed with walls that are impregnable, — impregnable against the enemy. They will be preserved, by the providence of Almighty God, as in a garden that is inclosed, — a garden that will be refreshed with the descent of celestial rain, that will be replenished, and bring forth the acceptable fruits of virtue and holiness. *My soul, saith the Psalmist, thirsteth for God; yea, for the living God; and again, As the heart panteth for the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God!* This is the disposition of the humble soul, who looks upon the Lord as his superior good, and prefers a communion with him

to the *increase of corn, wine, or oil*. He will, by every method, endeavour to keep open a communication with this fountain, — a fountain that will never be exhausted. Thanks be to God *we have a river*: though we may be exposed to many things, to the darkness and light, the heat and the cold, yet, in the course of our pilgrimage, there is a river that flows from Hermon's hills, the streams whereof ever make glad the heritage of God.

Let us attempt to pass along this river that we may be replenished, so shall we experience that which is spoken of Wisdom, *my brook became a river, and my river became a sea*. The good, the virtuous, man; the man, that feels the emotions of filial piety, has recourse to this river. A brook is opened to him by the way, at which he can satiate his thirst, and renew his strength. He will, in waiting upon God, *mount up as on wings of an eagle, he will walk, and not be weary; run, and not be faint*. Thanks be to God that we have this river, and I wish

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we may distinguish this *fountain of living water* from the *broken cisterns that can hold no water*. If this be the case with our hearts, then we shall find our consolation enlarge, our hopes increase till they are lost in fruition, and our faith terminate in open vision, in the contemplation of those truths of which we can at present form but inadequate ideas, when we shall enter into the joy of our Lord, and be numbered with the wise. *They that are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever !*

P R A Y E R

AT THE

CONCLUSION OF THE MEETING.

MOST Gracious God, inspire our hearts with suitable reverence, that we may approach thee acceptably, and offer up our prayers to thee in full assurance that, though heaven is thy throne, and the earth thy footstool, yet thou art graciously pleased to notice the inhabitants of this
lower

lower world, as well as those who are clothed with the greatest degree of dignity, and are perfectly happy in a world that is infinitely superior. Impress our hearts with a sense of thy goodness, upon which we every moment depend. Let it be manifested unto us, that the dispensing of thy manifold grace should impress us with emotions of filial piety and gratitude unto thee, who art the source of every thing that is good. We approach thy altar in the multitude of thy mercies, and look in confidence towards thee, that, notwithstanding our many infirmities, *there is mercy with thee, that thou mayest be feared.* Grant, we beseech thee, that, by the operation of thy holy Spirit, thou everlasting Shepherd and Bishop of souls, multitudes may be gathered out of the wilderness, in which they have wandered and been lost, within thy fold, to become a part of thy flock, and the sheep of thy pasture. Be pleased, in mercy, to bring back every sheep that has strayed unto the fold again, that, as we are thine by

creation, we may, at length, be thine by adoption into a state of sonship, and become heirs of a spiritual inheritance, the crown immortal, that shall never fade away.

O most righteous and everlasting Father, be pleased, we humbly beseech thee, to look down upon the various circumstances of thy people; console the poor, and abate the pride of the rich, that we may, by the interposition of thy spirit, be what thou wouldst have us to be, a humble dependent people, looking up unto thee as the source whence all our blessings are derived, and imploring at thy throne to be instructed to use our talents to the ends and purposes for which thou hast given them, that, when ever thou shalt be pleased to summon us hence, we may have an evidence, a hope, as an anchor that is most sure and steadfast, that may preserve our souls in tranquillity when the waves of affliction roar, when the winds of adversity may blow upon us from every quarter. In the most painful dispensations

sations we may have to pass through, grant that we may find an asylum in thy name, which has been the tower of defence, the munition of rocks, to the righteous in all generations.

O Lord, enable us to call successfully upon thy name, that we may be saved with an everlasting salvation; that, fortified by thy grace, we may endure the dangers of prosperity, and also the trials of poverty, if they shall be permitted to attend us; that we may not be elevated too high, nor puffed up to deny thee, and say, who is the Lord? nor may be ever so cast down and oppressed in adversity, as to steal, and take thy name in vain, to deny thee, O God; but that, in every dispensation of thy providence, we may humbly acquiesce with thy will, and say, *Not my will, O Lord, but thine be done.*

Grant, we beseech thee, that, under an awful sense of thy attributes, which it is not in the power of human beings adequately to conceive, nor of the tongues of an-

gels to express, in the contemplation of thy attributes, our souls, inflamed with a spirit of pure devotion, may ascend up, and put up our supplications, to thee, O Lord. We feel a holy awe pervade our souls: in the contemplation of thy attributes our words are swallowed up: we offer unto thee the increase of praise, and ascribe unto thee every thing that is excellent, every thing that is great: to thee belong majesty and dominion, with every other adorable attribute, now and for evermore. Amen.

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE III.

THERE is part of a psalm, or hymn, composed by a servant of God, which has been revived, in my remembrance, in this meeting; and I may say, in much sincerity, it hath been the language of my heart: *Offer unto God thanksgiving.*

The design of the author of this psalm was, to excite, both in himself and in the minds of others, the most fervent emotions of gratitude, thanksgiving, and praise. Thanksgiving, if it be more than the cold formality

formality of unmeaning words, is the genuine offspring of gratitude and devotion. It arises from a just sense of the manifold favours bestowed upon us by the providence of God, who hath liberally supplied his creatures with the provision necessary for them.

The Scriptures speak of the Almighty not only as watching over, and providing for, the superior class of beings in this world, but as extending his providential care (to use a comparative mode of speech) to the meanest of his creatures. Not a sparrow falls without him ; he heareth the young ravens when they cry, and he hath provided richly for the soul of every living thing. Man, in a peculiar manner, appears to be distinguished above all other classes of animal existence by a rational power of reflection. He is capable of ascending from effect to cause, of observing the concatenation thereof, and of inferring, from the phenomena of nature, the existence of a wise, powerful, intelligent, and good, Being

ing, whom we call God. Hence he becomes an accountable creature : hence he has a motive to thanksgiving and praise, of which the lower orders of animals are not capable ; for, whatever similarity there may be between the endowments of inferior animals, and their instinctive powers, and the faculties of the human species, yet history affords us no instance of the former betraying the least signs of devotion. Man is made a little, and perhaps but a little, lower than the angels. He is capable of contemplating the attributes of the supreme Cause ; and who can contemplate the attributes of the divine Being without feeling the emotions of filial fear and gratitude ? But it is exceedingly to be regretted, that we use not those superior powers, with which we are endued to the noblest purposes, for which they were given us. We employ too little of the short span of time in the investigation of subjects which are adapted to inspire us with the best affections, and to acquire those virtues that would

would dignify our nature: but, instead thereof, we descend from the rank we should fill, and, with inferior orders of animals, make passion, instead of right reason, our guide and ruler. Thus we become governed by those sensual appetites which we should govern. We give away the power received for the noblest purposes, or make it subservient to our lowest passions; and, like those animals which are fed by fruit which drops spontaneously from the trees, some people seem destitute of reflection whence their provision is derived, seldom look up, seldom, if ever, contemplate the cause, seldom reflect *that the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof, with the cattle on a thousand hills*, and that we are every moment dependent on his bounty. This is the unhappy circumstance of too many of the sons and daughters of men.

I apprehend the principal design of all Gospel ministers is, to excite in the minds of their hearers such reflections, on beings
circumstanced

circumstanced as we are, and on the relation we bear one to another and to the supreme Cause, as may be productive of filial piety, prompt us to make our hearts the sacred altar of the Lord Almighty, and *offer unto God thanksgiving and praise.*

I fervently wish that all our hearts may be at this season, and not only at this season but at all other times, so impressed with the infinite obligation we are under to the supreme Being, that thanksgiving might become an habitual frame of spirit, continued throughout all the occurrences of life, setting the Lord always before our eyes that we do not evil or offend him. Ingratitude, it seems, actuated the children of Israel. It hath been the principal cause, or source, of all moral evil. Thus, the people of the house of Israel received the favours of heaven without turning their thoughts reverently toward the source whence they were derived: *they ate and drank, and rose up to play.*

Instead

Instead of being disposed to thanksgiving, they indulged a spirit of levity. They rioted on the divine bounty, and forgot to give thanks: they wanted, therefore, a proper motive to the discharge of their several duties; for, when we are impressed with a proper sense of gratitude for favours received, we are naturally disposed to search for, or study, the will and pleasure of the person who conferred on us those favours. We carefully watch for an opportunity to express our gratitude, not only in being verbally thankful, but are also studious to avoid every thing that would furnish occasion of offence to our benefactor; and, on the other hand, are equally studious to render ourselves, as much as possible, worthy objects of his favourable regard. Thus it is in social life among men, and similar thereto it is with those minds which are impressed with a sense of gratitude to the supreme Being. The consideration of his goodness should lead us to reflect on our own unworthiness; for, we are indeed *un-*
worthy

worthy of the least of his mercies, and of his truth; yet he has favoured us with the former and the latter rain, the upper and the nether springs; with seed-time and with harvest; has filled our barns with plenty, and hath liberally provided for the sustenance of his creatures. Impressed with the sense which this obligation imposes, the grateful heart would approach his altar in the multitude of his mercies, and say, What shall we render unto thee for thy goodness to the children of men?

This is the language of the devoted heart; and, though it might be uttered only mentally, or not be expressed by any vocal sound, yet the Searcher of hearts would accept that affection, or devotion of mind. He accepts the intention of the heart before it is brought forth, or manifested by any external act, and we shall then have the most powerful motive to hope for the divine aid. Were our hearts thus impressed, we should embrace every opportunity of enquiring how we should commend
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ourselves to his notice, — how express the
 gratitude we feel. We should be induced
 to manifest it by a discharge of every re-
 ligious and of every social duty, by waiting
 upon and worshipping him, by offering to
 him the pure incense of thanksgiving and
 praise, expressing what we feel for the
 favours received, by communicating, in
 proportion to our respective measures, to
 those who stand in need of assistance; and,
 indeed, impressed with the emotions of
 gratitude to God, it will be the chief plea-
 sure of our lives to *go about doing good* a-
 mong men. But of those, who are desti-
 tute of this most worthy principle of grati-
 tude, other joys allure the affections, other
 motives than religious and social duties.
 They are in pursuit of some favourite sen-
 sual object, which, at best, compared with
 the superior good, is only an unsubstantial
 phantom, and pursued at the expence of e-
 very thing that confers real dignity on a

rational being, and renders him acceptable to the Judge of all the earth.

Thus the children of Israel, in proportion as they lost sight of the providence of the Almighty, and of what he had done for them, became more and more depraved; insomuch, that they joined some of the surrounding nations in the performance of idolatrous acts. They seemed to have lost the idea of the unity of God: they became destitute of a spirit of gratitude. The prophet, in the name of the Lord, degrades them beneath the condition of the most contemptible classes of animals: *Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! for, the Lord hath spoken the ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.* If these animals are not capable of rational reflection, yet they possess something that bears a resemblance of gratitude, distinguished by the appellation of *instinct*. They, at least, express some notice of those on whom they depend for support: *the ox*
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knoweth

knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib. This passage sets forth the great moral depravity of that people; and, in short, the history, which the holy Scriptures furnish us with respecting the children of Israel, conveys a charge of peculiar ignorance, obstinacy, and ingratitude: *The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil doers!* In another place, the prophet hath shewn, that, in departing from what they should have been, in forsaking the God of their fathers, for want of a reverent attention to his statutes, they lost the spirit of devotion, and judgements were inflicted on them by extraordinary causes. They deprived themselves of the felicity that is infinitely superior to all the gratifications of sensual appetites. *My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me, the Fountain of living waters, and have hewn to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, which can hold no water.* Here again

again they are indirectly charged with ingratitude. To use the figurative language of the holy Scriptures, *he spread a table for them in the wilderness*, conducted them by a *cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night*, put them into possession of *vineyards which were not theirs, and of olive-yards which they had not planted*, yet they were ungrateful; they ceased to *offer unto God thanksgiving*; that is to say, the species of thanksgiving which is acceptable to the supreme Being. They made, indeed, many prayers; they spread forth their hands toward the habitation of his holiness; the services of the tabernacle were punctually performed; but, with all these, they possessed not a spirit of thanksgiving, but offered unto God a mere form of words, sentiments in which the heart took no part, which had not been dictated by a spirit of gratitude. They offered, therefore, the *sacrifice of fools*. Such is the weakness of our nature, that we would persuade ourselves, were it possible, that the Almighty possesses the vanity and ambition

of a creature who is fond of the incense of adulation, and capable of being deceived by the offerings of flattery, in which the heart is not interested; but, as he is without the parts, so he is without the passions, of a creature. No weakness is to be attributed to him, who is perfect and self-sufficient. He can derive no additional felicity from our thanksgiving: he can experience no diminution from our withholding him the praise which is due to his great and excellent name. He has instituted worship, and commanded thanksgiving, for our sakes, to promote our felicity, and not his own. Can we suppose, that, approaching him with words composed by way of prayer and thanksgiving, in which the heart is not interested, can be acceptable to him? No: and therefore their new moons, the calling of their assemblies, and their many prayers, were not acceptable incense to the Lord God of Sabaoth. They had committed two evils: *they had forsaken him, the Fountain of living waters, and had*
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beewn unto themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, which could hold no water. Therein is set forth the great loss that people sustained when they departed in heart from that reverent attention which they should have paid to the supreme Being while they were partakers of his favours and mercies; the great loss they sustained by forsaking the everlasting Fountain of felicity for the mere sensual pleasures of this life, which are not to be compared with the spiritual joys that result from a state of real devotion and thanksgiving.

There is no source of temporal pleasure but what may soon terminate. Disappointment awaits us in every state. Pains, afflictions, diseases, may soon render us incapable of tasting those pleasures we have long been in the pursuit of; and, after a tedious chase, in the moment when we bless ourselves with the expectation of fruition, we grasp the phantom, and find it air. How many instances have we seen of people, intoxicated with a spirit of ambition and ava-

rice, who supposed that the accumulation of wealth would render them perfectly happy ; who have proposed to themselves a future period, when they should sit down at the end of their labours in peace ; and have gone on, from one stage of life to another, led as it were by an *ignis-fatuus*, to perambulate the enchanted circle ! Disappointment has terminated their pursuits. If we have not something else to rest our hopes upon than the pleasure which this world can produce, we shall be like the man who dreamt that he was hungry, and ate ; thirsty, and he drank ; but awoke, and beheld his appetites still remained : and this may perhaps constitute, in part, the misery of a future state,—the entering into it with appetites which cannot be gratified.

Having attempted to shew the importance of gratitude, and the dismal consequences that flow from the contrary principle, I will now attempt, at least, to point out one cause why we feel so little of this virtuous affection ; — that is, Ambition,

tion, the grand enemy of man's felicity. On the wings of imagination, in an extravagant anticipation of the future, man deprives himself of the enjoyment which virtue would yield him in the present hour. *He labours for very vanity, and disquiets himself in vain.* Perhaps we shall find the very seeds of ambition sown as it were, and interwoven, with our very nature and constitution. There is some species of ambition that takes place in the lowest as well as in the highest ranks of society. In our present circumstances, let them be what they may above wanting the necessaries of life, (which is the lot of but very few, comparatively speaking; and, of this few, the evil has been brought upon them principally by their own imprudence and intemperance,) we should be content. A few, indeed, have been subjected to want the necessaries of life by unavoidable events: these are worthy objects of charity, and will not be neglected by those who can feel for another's woe. But, indeed, such is

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the want of sympathy, that some people seldom see an affliction without their own doors. They live for themselves only, and seem as if they were as destitute of the love of their neighbour as they are of gratitude to God. But, with respect to this passion of ambition, against which I would in a peculiar manner endeavour to guard the minds of youth, resist it early, or it will grow with your growth, and strengthen with your strength. Guard against the errors of libertinism, the errors of the spendthrift, and the errors of the miser, that you may early possess the emotions of gratitude to the Author of your being. If it be your lot to abound in this world's goods, receive the superabundant favours with gratitude, and thankfully apply them to the purposes for which they were given. But, such is the nature of this passion, (ambition,) that it prompts us to look up to the classes of mankind a little above us, and not to the Most High. We look among our neighbours, who have acquired

a little more than we have acquired, and are led as it were imperceptibly towards a state we can never attain. I have never known, in the course of my observation, a person, who was not contented in a low state of life, that was ever happier in a higher; but I have known some who have been happy in a low station, and, when they have eaten their morsel in quietness, have offered unto God thanksgiving and praise. Happiness is tendered to all. Be but grateful, and thou shalt be happy; for, gratitude will inspire us with this sentiment, *Having food and raiment, be therewith content.*

I make these observations on the subject without premeditation; and, indeed, the want of order in my delivery of them will be a sufficient proof of it. I recommend them to your serious consideration, and wish your hearts may be suitably impressed with the subject. And, though thanksgiving should be our general mental habit, our hearts should be particularly impressed with it

it at particular times. We ought to look up with peculiar thanksgiving to the throne of grace in the moment of fruition. We have enjoined no peculiar mode, or form, of prayer or thanksgiving. We have no ceremony by way of grace before and after meat ; but, in dispensing with these forms, we do not dispense with the thing itself intended by them. We ought to be impressed with filial piety towards our Almighty Father. We ought to make a solemn pause previous to our partaking of the divine bounty, and to possess such a spirit of devotion, that we may *offer*, at least mentally, *unto God thanksgiving and praise.*

And, at the close of the day, though we have no form of evening or morning prayer, yet I would attempt to impress the minds of youth especially, that, before they close their eyes to sleep, they should review the transactions of the past day, and see what there is to approve, what to condemn,—to contemplate the mercy and the goodness extended to them, that they may
offer

offer unto God thanksgiving for his mercies, and commend themselves to his protection. Again, in the morning, we ought also to offer up thanksgiving. If we possess this disposition of mind, we shall not be entangled with the things of this life, which ensnare, but shall consider ourselves as strangers and pilgrims on earth, anticipating a better country, a better inheritance, where, with saints and angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, in a humble contemplation of the divine attributes, and of the dispensations of his providence, and favoured with the renewed impression of his goodness, we may, with purified spirits, approach him in the multitude of his mercies, and *offer unto him thanksgiving and praise!*

DISCOURSE

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DISCOURSE

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DISCOURSE IV.

ARISE, and go hence ; for, *this is not thy rest !* We are abundantly instructed in the holy scriptures respecting the shortness of human life, the brevity of all terrestrial pleasures, and the vanity of all human pursuits, compared with the satisfaction which is found in a course of virtue, and the glorious hope with which it inspires its humble votaries of ultimately possessing

an inheritance which is incorruptible, and fadeth not away.

It is the worthy purpose, or end, of real religion, to ennoble our nature, to raise our thoughts and contemplations from carnal to spiritual, from terrestrial to celestial, objects. *Set your affections*, says the apostle, *on things above, not on things on the earth.* If our affections be solely placed on things which are beneath, or on the pleasures derived to us from an intercourse with the objects of sense, our happiness, indeed, will be exceedingly short-lived and uncertain. *Here we have no continuing city*: every thing of a terrestrial nature is mutable. There is not any state or circumstance of life, however pleasing, that we can have any security will continue long.

A transition, from a state of opulence to a state of poverty, our own observations have instructed us, has sometimes been made very quick. We cannot either foresee or prevent those occurrences which may be productive in future of prosperity
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or adversity, of pleasure or pain. *The fashion of this world*, saith the apostle, *passeth away*, and we are indeed passing with it. Short is the span of human life : short the path we have to tread from the cradle to the grave, the house appointed for the reception of all living ; for, *dust thou art, and to dust thou shalt return*. Seeing, therefore, *we have no continuing city*, let us form the wise resolution of seeking one that is to come ; *a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God*. I have understood by this passage of Scripture, which is figurative, that we are called upon, as rational creatures, by the voice of divine wisdom, seeing all the pleasures, or satisfactions, which arise from an intercourse with sensible objects, must terminate, to endeavour, by the best use or application of those powers, which heaven has endued us with, to seek that species of happiness which will be permanent, and is adapted to the nature of a rational and an immortal spirit. This is the comment which I have made on this passage

passage of holy writ : and I do most fervently wish that our minds may be disposed at this season seriously to reflect on the comparative folly of all sensual indulgences, and on the vanity of human pursuits ; and be animated to seek the superior good, a habitation in the *city of the saints solemnities, a city that bath foundations*. Look, saith the text, upon *Zion, the city of our solemnities, and thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation ; not one of its stakes shall ever be removed, nor any of its cords be broken* : there the glorious Lord is to its inhabitants as *a place of broad rivers and streams*. He is the source whence their happiness is derived ; and, as he is immortal, the happiness, derived from an intercourse or communion with him will consequently be permanent. We are instructed by what means we are to seek successfully this *city that bath foundations*. We are told, in the Revelations, in words somewhat of this import, Blessed is he who keepeth the commandments of God : he shall have access to the tree of life, which stands

stands in the midst of the Paradise of God, shall enter in through the gates into the city, and become a fellow-citizen with the saints, and of the household of God. Here we learn, that, if we would possess a habitation in this city, we must seek it by walking in the commandments. Again, *if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.* There is no other way to become an inhabitant of this city than by obedience to the sacred commandments of heaven, which are of universal obligation. Let us not, therefore, expect to climb up any other way, or to attain a state of felicity hereafter, by any other mode than obedience from the heart to the manifestations of the divine will; and, with respect to the commandments of God, we are also instructed by what means they are to be ascertained; at least, by individuals for themselves: *a manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.* It is called *light*, because it hath a property which is analogous to that element. It illuminates the understandings

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of mankind, by instructing them in matters of the greatest importance,—matters which respect their final acceptance with the Judge of the whole earth at the last day.

But, though the light shines, or a *manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal*, yet there are, comparatively speaking, but few who attend to its dictates, and pursue that course of virtue which the light of the gospel of Jesus evidently points out. It is with many as it was with the multitude when our Lord was personally on earth. *Light, says he, is come into the world, but men love darkness rather than light.* He came, a divine messenger of heaven, to propose the terms of reconciliation to fallen creatures. He came to enlighten their understandings, to correct the depravity of their hearts, to purify them, and to make them meet for an *inheritance which is incorruptible, and fadeth not away.* He came to reveal to them the way which leads to this glorious city; but they

they turned a deaf ear to the instructions of wisdom: they would not attend to his counsel, nor be admonished by his reproofs. *Light is come into the world, but men love darkness rather than light. They hate the light, neither come to the light, lest their deeds should be reprov'd.*

Perhaps, if we review our lives; if we look into the book of conscience, we shall find something recorded there which bears a resemblance, more or less, to the circumstance of those people in the days of our Lord's personal appearance on earth. There is not a being, arrived to years capable of serious reflection, who hath not had some secret convictions for doing wrong; who hath not had some compunction of conscience for having transgressed the laws and statutes of heaven. But, as the pointing of the sacred finger leads to things contrary to the wish of the sensual heart, immersed in pleasures derived from terrestrial pursuits, we are not disposed to attend to the instruction of the sacred monitor.

We are rather disposed to be flattered in our vices, to be soothed in our sins, than to have them corrected, and to be led into the just man's path, *which is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.*

There is a circumstance on record concerning an ancient king, which may serve, perhaps, to illustrate the doctrine which I have in view to assert. He was about to lead out his army to battle, and was doubtful of the event of his intended enterprize. He was desirous, if possible, to know what should be the decision of the day; and, for that purpose, he intended to consult some seer; but he meant some person who should be capable of flattering his vanity and wishes. A prophet of the Lord was proposed to him,—one who had never acted the part of a sycophant, but had spoken the word of the Lord faithfully: — but he was not disposed to consult this prophet. That, indeed, which would have recommended him to every judicious person, was the cause

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of his refusing to consult him. He knew he would not attempt to sooth his vanity, prophesy smooth things, or speak deceit: therefore he determined not to consult him.

I hate him, for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil. And thus, with respect to the divine monitor, the manifestation of the grace of God in the human heart, which bears a faithful testimony to our consciences; we are not disposed to attend to its dictates, but we call upon our passions to sooth us, to flatter us, and to concur with our vain hopes, and, by this means, have neglected things which are of the greatest importance. We are rather desirous that we may be indulged in the pursuit of lying vanities, than to have our eyes effectually opened to see our own nakedness, the depravity of our hearts, and the way which leads to Zion. *I hate him; for, he doth not speak good concerning me, but evil.* Thus mankind hate the reproofs of the divine light in their own consciences, because it testifies against their darling pas-

sions, and thwarts them in their pleasing pursuits; intercepts their long-indulged prospects, and points out to them a road, the pursuit of which would afford them no pleasure though it leads to Zion. Their thoughts are engrossed by inferior objects; they have no taste, or relish, for things which are of a spiritual nature, but would, if it were possible, take up their rest in transient gratifications, and not be solicitous with respect to the conclusion of the scene, or what shall be their circumstance, or state, in the world, or life, which is to come.

They hate the light: why so? because it manifests their deeds of darkness. They do not like to take a view of their own hearts. Such is the depravity thereof, that a view of it is indeed humiliating to the pride of human nature. They had rather draw a veil over their sins than see them in their proper colours, as they really are; or pursue such measures of conduct as would ennoble their nature, rectify their
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judgements, and open to them prospects far more inviting than what this world can afford, even the prospect of an everlasting habitation *in the new heaven and the new earth, wherein righteousness dwells.*

But, though I am led to speak after this manner, I have no doubt that there are many in this audience who have weighed the worth of vanity, and estimated the insignificancy of all terrestrial things ; who have seen that they are not adapted to satiate the thirst of an immortal spirit. They have contemplated, and have gathered from their own observations, that every thing is mutable ;— that the finger of Omnipotence hath written on the face of universal nature, *They shall perish.* They have gathered, I say, from their own observations, that every thing, included in this system, is mutable ; and that, in a short time, a period will be put to their existence on earth, when their connection with all sublunary objects will be dissolved for ever. Under such a prospect of the uncer-

fainty of terrestrial pleasures, they have been animated to *seek a city which hath foundations*; or, in other words, have been excited, by the purest motives, to pursue those means which will introduce that happiness into the soul which is not dependent on any elementary or secondary causes, but on an union of soul with the Author of its being; and have chosen, if it should be their lot in the course of the providence of divine wisdom, to *suffer rather affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season*. I salute these with the salvation of the love of the gospel of Christ. These are *seeking a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God*; and their hope will not be as the *hope of the hypocrite, which will perish*, but a hope that will terminate in an everlasting fruition of joys, which *eye hath not seen, nor hath ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive*. Blessed are they *who keep the commandments of God: they will have access to the tree of life, which stands in*
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the midst of the Paradise of God, and shall enter in through the gates into the city,—become fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God. For, having been redeemed from the bondage of corruption, they shall enjoy the glorious liberty of the sons of God; they shall enter into the city of the saints solemnities, the inhabitants whereof shall never complain that they are sick. Indeed, it affords the most enlivening species of hope, to them that seek this city, that, when the clouds shall gather blackness, darkness, and tempest, — when the prospect of the future shall be exceedingly gloomy,—they can penetrate this gloom, and anticipate an everlasting habitation in purer skies, *in the new heaven and in the new earth, wherein righteousness dwells.* I wish, friends, we may be effectually animated by the consideration of these things: that, seeing every thing is uncertain, and that we may be deprived of the choicest of terrestrial blessings in an unexpected hour, let us *seek a city that hath foundations, and lay*

lay up for ourselves a good foundation against the time which is to come.

It is, indeed, to be acknowledged, with reverent gratitude and praise, that many are the blessings we have received in the course of God's providence ; and we ought to receive them in a humble becoming manner,—in a manner becoming dependent beings, who have nothing which they have not received, and to use, or apply, them to the purpose for which they were given. But we are not to rest satisfied in those enjoyments which are to be derived merely from an intercourse with terrestrial objects. *Arise, and go hence ; this is not thy rest ! But there is a rest prepared for the people of God ;* and that rest is to be attained by a reverent attention to his commandments. This is the constant doctrine of the holy Scriptures, both in the old and in the new Testament : let us, therefore, study the will of heaven respecting us ; and let it be our constant concern to recommend ourselves to the Author of our being, by manifesting the

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the love, we feel or possess for him, in a reverent attention to his statutes and his commandments. Were our hearts thus disposed heaven-ward to seek the superior good, we should be able to join with the royal psalmist in saying, *My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God!* Again, *As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God!* A contemplation of the divine law, to those who love it, would open a source of the most exalted pleasure, and they would indeed say with the psalmist, *Thy statutes are my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.* Now I understand, by *songs* in the text, that they were the chief, or principal, objects of his affections; that they were inscribed on the tablet of his heart, as well as written on the posts of his doors. They were the subjects of his meditation when he lay down and when he rose up.

May it please the Author of all good so to inspire our hearts with a noble contempt of all sensual indulgences, as that we may pursue

pursue those things which are most excellent ; and, seeing the insufficiency of all terrestrial scenes to communicate to us permanent felicity, we may set our affections on things which are above, and, by a course of practical virtue and obedience, lay up for ourselves treasure in heaven, where the moth nor rust cannot corrupt, nor thieves break through, and steal. Then shall we ultimately attain that rest which is prepared for the people of God, in which there is fulness of joy !

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE V.

THERE is a passage of holy writ which hath engaged my serious meditation. You will find it, on sacred record, in words to this purport :

If thine own heart condemn thee not, then hast thou confidence towards God ; by which I have understood, thou hast confidence, and a humble expectation of the divine blessing, and that thou shalt be accepted of the Judge of the whole earth in the day of judgement, the day of final decision.

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The apostle also says, *But, if thine own heart condemn thee, remember that God is greater, and knoweth all things; by which I have understood, that, if we stand condemned at the tribunal of our own hearts, we shall not be approved of him, who looketh not as man looketh, but looketh at the heart.*

I conceive, however, that this passage is not to be admitted without some exception; for, it is possible that some people may have digressed so widely from the paths of truth and virtue, and sunk so deeply into the lowest species of sensuality, as to have their understandings clouded, and perceive not the propriety and the excellency of virtue. Their consciences are become seared as with a hot iron. Reiterated transgression of the divine law renders the heart, as it were, in some degree, callous, and it loses that delicate moral sensibility distinguished by the appellation of conscience. On the other hand, some pious well-disposed people, afflicted perhaps by some species of natural disease,

disease, have let in, and cherished, groundless fears and apprehensions, have thought themselves so morally depraved and polluted, that, though some of them seem to be the best of mankind, we may have observed them to have been brought to the confines of the horrible pit of despair. These may, I think, be considered as exceptions to this general rule of the apostle.

Now I conceive the apostle intended to this purport; that, whoever wishes to receive the best information respecting the duties which he owes to his Maker and to his fellow-creatures, and pursues those means of instruction which he apprehends will be the most conducive to obtain it, and who conforms his life, his manners, and his conversation, agreeably to that knowledge which he has received, as he will not be condemned of his own heart, but have the testimony of a *conscience void of offence towards God and towards man*, so he will be approved of his Maker, and approved of the wise, the discerning, and the good, of all

all ranks and denominations of men. On the contrary, the man who wilfully acts against the sober dictates of his judgement, will of course (unless he becomes indeed a reprobate) feel the testimony of his own conscience against him. Perhaps this moral sensibility may not always attend him. In his convivial hours,—hours that are set apart for the gratification of merely sensual appetites,—hours that are passed in unholy delights, in rioting and *drunkenness*, in *chambering* and *wantonness*, he may not be susceptible of the impressions of conscience; yet, in the moments of his recess, when he retires from the pleasing and delusive scenes of vanity, in the moments of cool reflection, he will feel the testimony of his own conscience, which may prompt him to act in a manner similar to that of our great primogenitor, who, in the calm evening of the day, remembered the transgression of the morn, felt the reproaches of his own conscience, and attempted to hide himself from the all-penetrating eye of the Lord of the

the universe. *Adam, where art thou?* He hid himself among the trees of the garden; and thus it is with us, or has been, more or less, with us all. We first transgressed, and then sought to hide our transgression; for, it is my firm opinion, that, if mankind were as heartily concerned to reform their evil practices as they are to conceal them, the work of reformation would soon be more striking and apparent amongst the several ranks and classes of mankind.

Whoever has the testimony of his conscience against him will have no solid foundation of hope, or expectation, of being approved of him whose laws he has transgressed, whose statutes he has violated.

I wish, my friends, we might be all suitably impressed with the importance of this subject. It is of all others the most interesting to us,—*a good conscience*.

But it is exceedingly to be regretted that this species of good, this species of riches,

is too seldom the object of our pursuit. In this world, we are as a guest that tarrieth but for half an hour. In a short time, those who possess goodly inheritances must leave them to their children or heirs. Generation succeeds to generation very quickly. Were we, therefore, to possess all the riches of this world; were we to be made proprietors of the world itself, under the anticipation of that solemn period when we shall be about to quit this terrestrial sphere, what is it that a man would not *give in exchange for his soul* ! What is it he would not part with, were it in the power of his disposal, for the testimony of a *good conscience*, to give him a humble confidence towards God, that the future state he is just entering upon shall be within the confines of the general assembly of the just and purified spirits, who, in the fruition of eternal joy, receive the *end of their faith*, even the *salvation of their souls* !

I beseech you, my friends, in the love of the gospel of Christ, that ye *walk wisely*,
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that ye be *circumspect*, that ye study, in the first place, your respective duties, that you be prompted by the purest and worthiest motives to act agreeably with the information you have received, that so you may possess this inestimable blessing, a *good conscience*, or a conscience void of offence both towards God and towards man.

This is that species of treasure which we are exhorted to *lay up for ourselves in heaven*, in bags that wax not old, where the moth and the rust cannot corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal. This is the species of riches, and the only species of riches, which the craft and violence of others cannot wrest from us; for, it is secured beyond the power of plunder: it is secured in a man's own heart, over which his neighbour can have no controul. But, whatever else he possesses, he may, in the course of divine providence, be stripped of. He may lose his fair inheritance; it may be translated to the hands of others by events which human wisdom could not foresee, nor hu-

man prudence prevent. He may be stripped of all his property, and be brought to penury and want; but the testimony of a good conscience cannot be taken from a man: it must be given away, — it must be voluntarily parted with, by a transgression of those dictates which may be called the law of conscience. Therefore let us lay up for ourselves a good foundation against the time to come.

But I am aware of an objection which, perhaps, may be made. It is this: the excellency of a good conscience is universally admitted; but where is the man who possesses this inestimable treasure? Where is the man who can lay his hand upon his heart, and say, that it *condemns him not*? Upon a review of the actions of his life, and the influencing motives of his conduct, where is the man who can lay his hand upon his heart, and pronounce himself immaculate?

I believe there is not such a man existing; that is to say, a man that doth not sin,

or hath not aforetime sinned ; *for, all have sinned, and fallen short of the glory of God,* and of course have forfeited those glorious privileges which were possessed by our primogenitors in their paradisiacal state, before they transgressed the divine law. We have sinned, and fallen short of the glory of God ; but we are abundantly instructed, both in the old and new Testament, that the Author of our being *willeth not the death of the sinner*,— that he willeth not the destruction of creatures which he hath formed capable of eternal life. He is not disposed, at all events, to consign them to the realms of irremediable woe and misery, but has manifested himself towards his creatures in the character not only of a just, but also of a merciful and gracious, being ; a being who compassionates the infirmities, the weaknesses, and wanderings, of his creatures, and who hath provided a means for the redemption of mankind from sin, and, of course, from misery : — that means is Jesus Christ, the mediator of the

new covenant, the high-priest of the Christian dispensation, constituted, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life, who remaineth a priest for ever. *It is a faithful saying, and it is worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners ; not to save them in their sins, but to save them from their sins, to cleanse them from all unrighteousness, to restore unto his creatures the glorious liberty of the sons of God, and, of consequence, a good conscience : Wherefore, says the apostle, we trust we have a good conscience.*

This is the great and glorious purpose of the manifestation of the Son of God, that, notwithstanding we have sinned, and fallen short of his glory ; that we all, as sheep, have gone astray from the sheepfold, and have wandered in the wilderness of this world, yet, if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness ; by which I understand, that the office of the mediator

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tor is not only to be the means of the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God, but that his office also is to cleanse and sanctify the penitent soul,—to *cleanse it from all unrighteousness*, and, of course, it will have a good conscience, and have confidence towards God. Now these are general propositions, to which we all accede. Offers of mercy are held out to us through Jesus Christ our Lord, and our consciences will most certainly condemn us unless we attempt to apply those offers, to apply those healing qualities, unto ourselves. The testimony of our consciences will stand against us if we neglect this great salvation, which is offered to us through Jesus Christ our Lord. I beseech you, therefore, by the mercies of God, (than which there is nothing, perhaps, more likely to influence the sensible and judicious part of mankind, who open their eyes, and view the vast extent of the divine empire;—who contemplate the phenomena of nature, and the several means that the Au-

thor of nature has taken for the conservation of all the species of his creatures, *I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God,) that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is our reasonable service.* But there is no sacrifice that can be offered upon the altar of God, there is no prayer whatever which claims the notice of the Lord God of Sabaoth, which is not the offspring of a humble, of a devoted, heart, sensible of its weakness, sensible of its unworthiness, and of a purity of intention to apply those means for its redemption, and to pursue those methods, for the future, which shall receive the testimony of conscience, and the recompence of the just at the last day.

Let it, then, be the first object of our attention to seek a good conscience. Let us think every thing else but as dross and as dung. Every acquisition we may make within the compass of the creation, bears no proportion to the blessing of a good conscience; for, possessing this, a man has
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peace at home. Whatever tumults may arise, whatever winds may blow, whatever afflictions may surround him, these will but play round his head ; they cannot reach his heart ; for, *the good man shall be satisfied from himself.* He will have a source of satisfaction in himself, which will dissipate every gloom,—a satisfaction the sensual are strangers to. He will look beyond the confines of time, and expect a habitation *in the new heavens and the new earth, wherein righteousness dwells.* Though men should look upon his life to be without use, and his end without honour, yet he will be approved of God, and the lot of his inheritance will be with the saints. But, if a man does not possess the testimony of his own conscience, he cannot be happy in any circumstance of life. Wherever he goes, his conscience will attend him ; and, even in the house of banqueting, he will sometimes, as it were, see a hand-writing on the wall, *Thou art weighed in the balance, and found wanting.* If he come to the greatest honour and preferment,

preferment, still he will be like Cain; and, having a bad conscience, may be doomed to compass the earth without being able to make a happy settlement in any part of it. He has no peace in himself: he is seeking for that without, which must be found (if ever it be found) within, him; for, if a man be completely satisfied, it must be from himself: (it must not, however, be considered as the effect of his moral conduct, apart from Jesus Christ; it must proceed from that pure state which is termed, in the sacred writings, *regeneration*.) His affections must be translated from creaturely objects to the Creator. They must be set, not on things beneath, but on things which are above, and then it will become the object of his pursuit, to lay up treasure in heaven; and, where the treasure is, there will the heart be also.

But, let it not be imagined that that is peculiar to an inhabitant above the stars. Let it not be imagined that he must ascend to the heights above to feel the joys of the com-

community, or society, of purified spirits ; for, the just upon earth, and the glorified in heaven, participate of the same eternal Fountain of mercy, goodness, and truth : they are replenished at the same immortal Fountain of mercy and goodness ; — a Fountain, that can never be drawn dry, — a Fountain, at which the righteous of all denominations have drunk. They have been refreshed with those streams which intersect this vale of tears ; and, as they have passed along, they have experienced a growth in grace, and in the saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. They have enjoyed a foretaste of that species of felicity *which eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man*, unregenerate man, *to conceive*. This is written for all that shall be joined to the society of the just ; not to any tribe or nation in particular, but to people of all names and tongues that *fear God and work righteousness*, whose hearts

hearts condemn them not, who possess the testimony of a good conscience.

We are told, that the kingdom of heaven is within us ; and our Lord, forewarning his disciples concerning the deceivers of the ensuing times, who should say, *Lo, here is Christ*, and *lo, there is Christ* ! cautions them, saying, go not forth after them : the kingdom of heaven, says he, is within you. And, in another place, it is defined to be righteousness, peace, and joy, in the Holy Ghost. Then, wherever there is the beauty of righteousness, wherever there is that moral rectitude which is consonant to the law of God, there is the kingdom of heaven,—there is the temple of the Holy Ghost ; and, thus sanctified in the name of the Most High, the vessel bears the inscription of *Holiness to the Lord ! The kingdom of heaven is within you.* Let us be concerned to experience that rectitude of heart, that conversion of soul, which will qualify us to enjoy the incomes of the Holy Spirit,—that
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will qualify us to have *communion with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.*

I commend these observations to your serious consideration, beseeching you, my friends, let it be the first object of your study to attain and keep a good conscience. If we are conscious of having sinned, let us implore the interposition of the divine mercy; let us be prostrate at the footstool of the throne of divine grace; let us attempt to feel those affections, those penitential affections, that will prompt us to enter into the temple of the Most High, in a disposition of mind suitable to the occasion, and similar to that of the poor publican. We have nothing that we can boast of. Indeed, the most exalted among men have nothing to boast of in the sight of God. After we have discharged our obligations, we are *unprofitable servants*. We are unprofitable to him, and have nothing to claim upon the score of merit, because we have done nothing but what was our duty.

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Let us, impressed, therefore, with these motives, *lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and run with patience the race that is set before us.* Let it be the just man's path, to which the eye of our mind may be allured, and our feet be turned, which is as a shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. That, as we pass along, and as we grow in years, we may grow in grace, we may grow in favour with the common Father of us all: that, when our natural sun may be on the decline, and nearly set, whether we are in the meridian or evening of old age, we may have a prospect of immortality; and, having our sun set in an unclouded horizon, it may be to us the glorious preface of an eternal fair day.

I commend us to God, and to a humble attention to the manifestation of that Spirit which he hath given to every man to profit *withal*, and which is adapted to the proper information of our judgements, to strengthen our virtuous resolutions, to guide us by its counsels through the wilderness of this world,

world, and establish us in the realms of glory, where, *with saints and angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect*, we may celebrate the praises of the Author of our being. Thus, if we act wisely, and wish to possess a good conscience, we shall be translated to that sphere where *the wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they, that turn many unto righteousness, as the stars, for ever and ever!*

PRAYER

Most gracious Creator, it is of
 thine infinite mercy that thou
 deignest to hear our prayers, or rather the
 least favourable notice of us: for, we have
 all, as lost sheep, gone astray: we have
 forsaken thy statutes, as our
 fathers have done. We are therefore
 unworthy of the least of thy mercies and
 grace, yet thou art pleased to encourage
 us to approach thy sacred altar, to un-

P R A Y E R

CONCLUSION OF THE MEETING.

MOST gracious Creator, it is of
 thine infinite mercy that thou
 deignest to hear our prayers, or takest the
 least favourable notice of us ; for, we have
 all, as lost sheep, gone astray : we have
 sinned, and forsaken thy statutes, as our
 fathers have done. We are, therefore,
 unworthy of the least of thy mercies and
 grace, yet thou art pleased to encourage
 us to approach thy sacred altar, to hum-
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ble ourselves before thee, and to offer up our supplications unto thee, the common Father of us all. Though heaven be thy throne, and the earth thy footstool, yet thou not only hearest, but hearkenest, to the voice of the prayer of thy creatures. The prayer of any, and every, penitent soul penetrates the heavens, and reaches thee. O most holy and merciful God, impress us, at this season, we humbly beseech thee, with suitable affections of soul to enter into thy house of prayer, and lift up our hearts with our hands to the habitation of thy holiness, sensible, most holy God, of thy infinite purity, and of that impurity which we have contracted by the transgression of thy law. We implore the extension of thy mercy, through Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins that are past, and that thou wouldst be pleased effectually to cleanse and sanctify us, through the operation of thy holy Spirit, before we shall go hence, and be no more seen; that, having a hope of immortality, we may be enabled,

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by the aid of thy Spirit, to pass the time of our sojourning here in fear, and, being concerned above all things to retain in our possession the testimony of a good conscience, we may be accepted of the Judge of the whole earth at the last day; that, in a solemn view of thy greatness, our souls may be humbled, that, under the influence of thy holy Spirit, we may offer up to thee the incense of thanksgiving and praise, ascribing to thee might, majesty, and glory, dominion, and every other excellent attribute with which thou art surrounded, now and for evermore. Amen.

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE VI.

WITHOUT Faith it is impossible to please God; for, he that cometh unto God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

The revival of this passage of holy writ, in my remembrance, hath been the means of exciting and fixing my attention upon the subject of faith.

It cannot, I conceive, have escaped the observation of any person, who is arrived at years of understanding, and is conversant

with the holy Scriptures, that the same word *faith* hath divers acceptations : that, in some places, it intends not only a belief in the existence of an infinitely wise, powerful, and intelligent, Being, who is a rewarder of them who diligently seek him ; but also an affiance, or trust, in seasons of adversity and probation, in that Being who has all power in heaven and earth, whose power is uncontrollable, who doeth whatsoever pleaseth him in the armies of heaven and amongst the inhabitants of the earth. — The word *faith* is also used to distinguish between the different dispensations ; to point out the glorious dispensation of the Gospel of Christ, which is called the *law of faith*, and to contradistinguish it from the Mosaic dispensation, which is called the *law of works* ; and I conceive, that, wherever any of the writers of the New Testament speak of the insignificance of works, with respect to the rendering a man acceptable to the Author of his being, the works of the law, or, to use the apostle's expression,

expresslon, the deeds of the law, by which no flesh living can be justified, are intended. The rituals of the legal dispensation are not of a nature to be trusted in. Our Saviour, in his person, fulfilled the obligation of that law, and was the end of that law for righteousness sake. It is therefore written, that he has taken away the hand-writing of ordinances, and nailed them to his cross, which must respect the rituals of the Mo-
saic dispensation.

Some people, whom I need not uncharitably censure, have, I conceive, entertained a mistaken notion respecting the nature of that faith which is effectual, through Christ, to the salvation of the soul. They have apprehended, that a belief in the existence of the supreme Being, and a belief in Jesus Christ, whom God has sent, is of itself sufficient, and, unto whomsoever this faith is given, they are to be deemed of the number of the chosen few, whom God predestinated from everlasting unto eternal life; and that this faith, apart from the

consideration of works, is sufficient unto salvation :——but to me it appears, on the most serious investigation of the Holy Scriptures, that, as without faith it is impossible to please God, so with faith it is possible to displease him. This is a proposition which I conceive might be proved from divers parts of the New Testament especially ; more particularly where we are told of people, who, after they knew God, (it implies that he was manifested unto them,) after they knew God, they glorified him not as God, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish hearts became darkened. They glorified him not as God, that is, they brought not forth those good fruits, by which it is said, that our Father who is in heaven is glorified ; for, herein, says our Lord, is my heavenly Father glorified, in that ye bring forth much fruit ; by which undoubtedly the fruits of the Spirit are intended, joy, peace, love, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, and faith. — It is possible that a man may be convinced

convinced with respect to the truth of certain propositions received upon the authority, the divine authority, of him who proposes them, and yet may act in direct contradiction to the obligation of those laws. Now we are in divers places instructed respecting the essentiality of faith; that it is a lively operating principle of the judgment, which hath a moral influence upon a man's actions; not a mere barren speculative faith, but a faith that worketh by love, — to what? to the purifying of the conscience from all dead works, to serve the living God, not in the oldness of the letter, but in the newness of the Spirit, and with life; and, lest the primitive Christians should entertain a mistaken notion of the efficacy of faith in the abstract, and should rest their hopes of salvation upon their subscription to certain articles of faith, though those articles be founded upon the basis of immutable truth, the apostle takes occasion to instruct them that faith without works is dead: Thinkest thou, O vain

man, that faith can save thee? the very devils (says he) believe, the very devils believe, and they also tremble; for, as the body without the soul is dead, so faith without works is dead also; and he proposed a test, a test of saving faith, which is easy and obvious, and ought to be more consulted than it is by the several classes and societies of religious professors: Shew me (says he) thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works, for, the tree is to be denominated by its fruit: *by their fruits you shall know them.* The true believer is distinguished from the practical infidel by his fruits; he brings forth fruits meet for repentance; he adds, to his faith, virtue; to virtue, knowledge; to knowledge, temperance; to temperance, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity: and, if these things (says the apostle) be in you, and abound, they shall make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the saving knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. *Shew me thy faith*

faith without thy works; a man may have the clearest conception of truth without reducing this theory into practice in his own person. To apprehend the right is one thing; to conform ourselves to the rule of right, in our lives and in our manners, is another thing; therefore it seems, to me, beyond the least degree of doubt, that something more than a speculative belief, or a faith in certain propositions, is necessary to render us acceptable to the supreme Being, and to qualify us for an inheritance among the saints in light, to be heirs of God, and co-heirs with Christ. And I wish, as it is a matter of infinite importance to us all, that we, agreeable to the advice of the apostle to the members of the primitive church, might examine ourselves whether we are in the faith: *Prove your own selves; know ye not yourselves how that Jesus Christ is in you unless ye be reprobates?* Let us not content ourselves, that we are the descendants of reputed Christian parents, that we have been made acquainted with the contents

contents of the sacred history of the old and of the new Testament; let us not rest satisfied merely with a profession of the Christian religion in theory, but let us also be concerned to act consistently with the nature and obligation of that holy religion which Jesus Christ was sent of the Father to promote among the sons and daughters of men.

The obligations and the Christian duties enjoined in the New Testament are adapted at once to better our condition in this world, to make us happier in our short pilgrimage through it, and also to secure to us everlasting felicity in the world which is to come. Let us not forget that our Lord says, *It is not every one that says, Lord, Lord, that shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father, who is in heaven.* And again our Lord instructs us thus: *If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.*

By good works, I mean a conformity of the will and of the powers of the mind to that

that law or rule of action, which is of God given unto man, to illuminate his paths in this world, and guide him by his counsel to the participation of the realms of eternal glory; and as the power of obedience is derived from him, the Author of all that is excellent and good, as he is the giver of every good and perfect gift, so that power is given unto us, through Jesus Christ, by which we are capable of discharging our several obligations. I say, it being the gift of God, and not inherent in the creature, we ascribe all unto him, who is the efficient cause of all holiness and virtue in every part of his vastly-extended empire; for, it is God that works in us to do according to his own good pleasure, which pleasure is, that we should walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, seeing that the days are evil; that we (to use the language of the apostle) should be *careful to maintain good works, which are good and profitable unto men.* I pretend not that they are profitable unto God; but they are profitable

profitable unto men ; and godliness (which implies the obligation of practical duties, as well as stedfastly believing) is profitable for all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and also of that which is to come ; but I may say, in the language of one formerly on this subject, with respect to the supreme Being, who is perfect, self-sufficient, and can receive nothing from his creatures, to whom he has communicated every thing. *If thou be righteous, what givest thou him, or what receiveth he of thine hand ? thy wickedness may hurt a man as thou art, and thy righteousness may profit the children of men.* It is for this purpose, this noble, this disinterested, purpose, that the Almighty has established a law to his creatures, not for his own profit, but for theirs. Hence it is said, that the sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath.

In the wisdom and supreme goodness of the Creator, the obligation of Christian duties, in all circumstances, is adapted to the nature and capacity of his creatures, to
promote

promote righteousness through all the ranks and classes of society; and, were but our obedience proportionate to our knowledge, did we act consistently with the dictates of our judgement and the dictates of our faith, we might hope to see the revival of that state, *when the morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy.*

Examine yourselves, whether you are in the faith; for, we are abundantly instructed, as I have already observed, that the faith that is saving is productive of good works; and it is the best and surest test whereby to try whether a man has a saving or only a speculative faith, as the tree is to be known by his fruits; for men do not gather grapes of thorns, nor figs of thistles. Therefore that professor of the Christian religion, the tenor of whose actions gives the lie to his profession; that professor gives a manifestation that he has only a traditional religion, a traditional zeal, and a traditional faith, like the people of the Jews, who expressed a veneration for the temple

temple of the most high God, and the rituals of the legal dispensation, and cried, *The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, are these.* But the prophet said, *Trust ye not in lying words, saying, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord; but amend your ways and your doings.*

Many and glorious are the privileges that are to be enjoyed by the believer, such a person as I have attempted to describe, who not only believes in the infinitely supreme and powerful Being; in the manifestation of his Son; in the history of his life, of his death, of his resurrection, of his ascension into glory, and in the principles and doctrines which he propagated; but who manifests that he has a faith that worketh by love, the tendency of which is to purify the conscience from dead works, to cleanse it from all unrighteousness, that the soul of man may become the temple of the Holy Ghost. — Great and glorious privileges are to be enjoyed by those few,
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by those of whatever religious society, who are partakers of true saving faith; for, it is worthy of being noted, that the Author of the Christian religion is of no party, but the friend of all; that his grace, like the rays of the sun, is extended to all, from sea to sea, and from the rivers unto the ends of the earth; insomuch that we are told in the Scriptures, that the Gospel is preached in every creature under heaven; that all have heard, though all have not obeyed.

Those, that are true believers, are of that flock and family unto whom it was said, *Fear not, little flock; it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. I am, says our Lord, the resurrection and the life; he, that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and he, that liveth and believeth on me, shall never die.* We must note, on this passage, that here, as well as in many other places in the New and in the Old Testament, we are not to take the sense of the Holy Ghost in a merely literal acceptation, because

because this would be to admit of a doctrine contrary to the nature of things, and contrary to fact. For instance, the dead are incapable of belief or disbelief, literally speaking; they are silent in the grave, and therefore are incapable of faith; it therefore must intend those who are dead in trespasses and sins, aliens to the commonwealth of Israel, strangers to the promises of the Gospel of Christ, lost and sunk in a sea of sensuality: these are they to whom the voice of the Son of God is extended, and those that hear may yet live; they may awake unto righteousness, and sin not. *Whoever, therefore, believes in me, that is to say, who receives me in the name of him that sent me, who embraces the doctrine I preach, who submits to the influence of the Holy Spirit given to them of me from the Father, those who become obedient to the word that I teach, though be were dead, yet shall be live; he shall be brought to live a life of righteousness, he will bring forth the fruit of righteousness,*
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and the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect shall be quietness and assurance for ever : and *he, that liveth and believeth in me, shall never die* : this is not, and cannot, be true in a literal sense ; for, we see that death happens to the righteous and to the wicked, to him that sacrificeth as well as to him that sacrificeth not ; it must therefore be intended in a spiritual sense ; he, that liveth and believeth in me, shall never die, shall never participate of that future woe and misery described under the character of the second death ; he shall be redeemed from the bondage of spiritual death, and restored into *the glorious liberty of the sons of God* ; he shall live a life of righteousness here, he shall enjoy spiritual communion with the Author of his being, he shall have fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ ; and, after the dissolution of this body, he shall be ushered into the realms of eternal life, he shall be united with the assembly of the just, the

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church of the first-born triumphant in glory.

Examine yourselves, whether you are in the faith. Let not us, as a people, any more than others, presume upon the profession of a belief in certain Scripture-doctrines, or in the profession of certain articles of faith ; but let us always remember, that, if ever we are capable of sustaining the dignity of saints in heaven, we must live the life of the just upon the earth ; we must pursue the just man's way, *which is as a shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.*

The obligation to practical religion, which I have attempted to impress upon the minds of this auditory, is yet more strongly enforced, by the Author of the Christian dispensation, at the close of that most excellent sermon which he preached on the mount. After having opened the heavenly treasures of doctrine, he concludes with saying, *If any man heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, he shall be likened to a foolish*

a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand. This is the case of the merely nominal Christian; he heareth, believeth, or assenteth to the doctrines of the Gospel of Christ; if any man heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, he shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell, and great was the fall thereof. On the contrary, he describes the man who indeed possesses saving faith, the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ; the man who will receive, at the close of his labours beneath the sun, the end of his faith, even the everlasting salvation of his soul: if any man heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, who built his house upon a rock; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell not, because it was fixed upon an immutable basis; for, it was founded upon a rock. This man builds upon that rock,

against which the gates of hell can never prevail.

God Almighty grant, that of his infinite mercy and goodness we may examine the foundation we are building upon, whether the hopes and expectations we have, of being saved with an everlasting salvation, be founded upon a speculative faith, or upon such a belief in the supreme Being, and in his Son, as may conform us in heart to that law, that rule of action, which the Author of universal nature has dispensed and given to all the classes of intelligent beings.

Examine yourselves, whether you are in the faith; prove your own selves; know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except you be reprobates? The manifestation of the grace of God here intended is in every man, and its design is to instruct him in that which is right, and to strengthen him in the performance of every virtue. This is the purpose of the manifestation of that grace which bringeth salvation, and
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which is given unto all men, not to a few, to the exclusion of the rest ; but, through the infinite mercy of the supreme Being, it is given to all men, and under all descriptions, teaching us that, *denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world, looking for the blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath given himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works.* — Let us not therefore neglect our own mercies, by neglecting that salvation which is offered to us through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let us be serious, let us be inquisitive, upon a matter of so great importance as that upon which our happiness in the world of spirits most certainly depends ; let us not content ourselves with the form and show of godliness, while we are destitute of its life, and of its power and heavenly virtue. May our hearts enter into the nature and spirit of true Christian

faith, that by this means we may have access to the Father through the Son, and that in these our religious and solemn assemblies we may possess that faith by which Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain; with that faith let us draw near to the temple of the most high, let us approach to that altar to which none that serve the tabernacle can pretend; let us approach the Author of our being and of all our mercies, that we may be disposed by him, the preparer of the heart, to receive the salutary influences of the Holy Ghost, and that we may feel ourselves under the description of those, mentioned in the Old Testament, who wait upon the name of the most high: *though the youth may faint, and though the young men may utterly fall, yet they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.*

To conclude, as my mind seems to be disburdened from that which appeared to be

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my duty, and which I have been performing, I trust in the ability that God giveth, without any kind of premeditation, under the influence of that celestial charity, which breathes glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, and good will towards men; under that influence, again I would enjoin the exhortation of the apostle: *Examine yourselves, whether you are in the faith; prove your own selves; know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except you be reprobates?*

L 4 PRAYER

P R A Y E R

AT THE

CONCLUSION OF THE MEETING.

MOST gracious God, the father
and fountain of all our mercies,
look down from heaven, the habitation of
thy holiness, upon us, thy poor unworthy
creatures, and impress us with a just sense
of what we are, and also of what thou
wouldst have us to be; that, seeing our-
selves as we are seen of thee, we may ab-
hor ourselves in dust and ashes, and feel all
that penitential contrition that is necessary
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to render us the objects of thy mercy ; that, on a review of our past lives ; we may see, and sincerely repent of, the transgressions we have committed ; and, under the influence of thine Holy Spirit, we may resolve, in the future steps of our short pilgrimage, to correct the errors of those that are irrecoverably past. O Lord, enable us to apply the means of salvation, which thou art granting unto us through Jesus Christ our Lord, that we may receive in meekness the ingrafted word which is able to save our souls. O Lord, enlighten our eyes to see, and inspire our hearts to perform, those things which make for our peace, those duties which thou hast enjoined unto us of indispensable obligation. — Most gracious Father, thou knowest the temptations with which we are beset ; thou knowest the weakness of our natural powers, and the strength of those temptations which assail us. Send us, therefore, help from thy sanctuary ; strengthen us, O Lord, and impart vigour to every virtuous resolution,

resolution, that we may be enabled to lay aside every weight and burthen, and the sin that does most easily beset us, and run with patience the race that is set before us, in humble faith and confidence in thee, the Creator, the Protector, and the Preserver, of men; that, through whatever scene it may be our lot to pass, we may feel the support of thine everlasting arm, that, when we pass through the valley of the shadow of death, we may fear no evil, and, whenever it shall please thee to summon us hence, it may be to join the general assembly and church of the first-born, where, with saints and angels, and with the spirits of just men made perfect, we may ever live to praise thy great and excellent name, to ascribe to thee the greatness, dominion, and glory, which belong unto thee, not only now, but henceforth and for evermore. Amen.

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE VII.

AN apostle, writing to one of the primitive churches, addressed them in this manner or to this purport: *Quench not the Spirit, despise not prophesying; prove all things, and hold fast that which is good.*

The writings both of the Old and the New Testament abundantly testify, that God doth not only reveal himself unto his rational creatures in the volume of his works, or the book of nature, in which the attributes, particularly of power and of intelligence, are eminently displayed, but that he also reveals himself unto his rational

tional creatures immediately by his Spirit, which I conceive to be the grand and primary rule or law of action to all ranks and classes of intelligent creatures, and that all other modes of the manifestation of his will are secondary, and subservient to the grand design or purpose thereof.

There is a spirit in man, (a rational capacity, by which he is eminently distinguished from the beasts of the field and the fowls of heaven,) and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him an understanding. It is very observable, that one of the chosen leaders of the people of Israel, after having solemnly, by way of commemoration, recounted the signal interpositions of divine Power, in the emancipation of that people from under the tyranny of Pharaoh, as one instance of the divine goodness, he saith, *he gave us also his good Spirit to instruct us.* This manifestation of himself by his Spirit, though extraordinarily dispensed to many of the prophets, was more or less the privilege of every individual; and we find

find the royal psalmist frequently alluding to this principle, and rejoicing therein: *The law, says he, of the Lord, is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.* The law, which he in this place intended, I conceive to be that law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, which sets us free from the law of sin and death. — A manifestation hereof was given even under the former dispensation of Moses; it was the conductor of that people, it was the source of their greatest consolation; for, they all *drank of that rock that followed them; and that rock, saith the apostle, was Christ.* *The law of the Lord, says he, is perfect;* by which he could not intend the law of rituals peculiar to that dispensation, or the sacrificial rites of the Jewish institution; *for, the law, says the apostle, made nothing perfect.* Again he instructeth us, that it made not perfect, as appertaining to the conscience: it is not the blood of bulls or of goats, or the ashes of an heifer, sprinkling the unclean, that
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could sanctify to the purifying of the conscience; for, *the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did, which hope is Christ.*

That he (to wit, David) intended the primary divine law manifested by the Spirit of God unto his creatures, is evident from divers other places.— *I delight, says he, in the law of the Lord; and again, blessed is the man whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth meditate day and night; he shall be as a tree that is planted by the rivers of waters.* And, that his chief felicity depended on an immediate union or communion with the God of Israel, is very evident from that place, where, under the pressure of his infirmities, and conscious of the want of superior aid, he breaks forth in this manner: *My soul thirsteth for God, yea, for the living God; again, as the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.*

Many other passages might be produced, from the writings even of the Old Testament,

ment, while the Jewish tabernacle was yet remaining: but it is more, still more, abundantly testified by our Saviour and by his apostles. *The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.* — This is that principle of intelligence given us in Jesus Christ, or through Jesus Christ, our Lord, which the apostle intended when he said, *quench not the Spirit*; which must certainly mean the inward manifestation of the Deity to the soul, that grace, a measure whereof is given to every man to profit withal; and, that it could not mean any written manifestation of himself, or the Scriptures, which some have conceived was intended by the Spirit, (who allege, that the Spirit, or the will, of God being revealed unto holy men immediately, was mediately communicated, through the instrumentality of the Scriptures, to the rest of mankind,) is very evident; for, the canon of the New Testament was not made up till some hundreds of years after the writing of this Epistle; nor doth it appear, that
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any epistles or writings of the evangelists were collected or completed even during the lives of the apostles. The New Testament, therefore, as a book, did not exist; but the apostle alludes to something that had been received, which I take to be *the manifestation of the Spirit, that is given to every man to profit withal.*

This principle of intelligence, this manifestation of the divine will, its effects, its properties, and its influence upon the human soul, is set forth under various figurative modes of expression. It is sometimes compared unto fire. As it is the property of fire to purify metal and separate heterogeneous matter, so the Spirit of God, operating on the soul, will thoroughly *purge away its dross and take away all its tin*; cleanse the soul from all unrighteousness, and of course make it a fit habitation of God through the Spirit.—Is not my word, saith the Lord, as a fire? as a fire to consume and destroy that part in man which is at enmity with that which is good? — and therefore

therefore the office of the high priest of this dispensation is set forth, under the same figurative mode of expression, by him who was the forerunner of Christ, who was the voice of one crying in the wilderness, *prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his path strait*. He baptized the people, as he said, indeed, with water, unto repentance; but, when he speaks of the ministration of Jesus, which was to succeed his, he saith: *He, that cometh after me, is mightier than I; whose shoe-latchet I am not worthy to loose; he shall baptize you with fire*. Now it cannot be conceived that the material element of fire is intended, which would destroy men's bodies; for, Jesus Christ came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them. *He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire; whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, gather his wheat into his garner, and the chaff he will burn up with unquenchable fire*. This Scripture I adduce to shew that the effects of the Holy Spirit upon the rational soul, the soul that

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is depraved by the transgression of the divine law, and has contracted the defilement of sin, is analogous to the operation of that element, that is adapted to purify and refine material bodies. Thus it is said, that a man, sanctified by the influence thereof, shall become as pure as gold, yea, more pure than the golden wedge of Ophir. This I take to be the one essential baptism, the baptism of the Holy Ghost, which cleanseth men from all unrighteousness, and which is necessary to constitute us the proper object of *that inheritance which is incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away*. For, the baptism that now saves is not an elementary baptism; the baptism which now saves is not the putting away the filth of the flesh, than which nothing could be more easy for a man to effectuate; but, it is that which gives the answer of a good conscience towards God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who hath said, *I am the resurrection and the life; he, who believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he*

be live; and he, who liveth and believeth on me, shall never die.

Quench not the Spirit. The simile, or figure, is very well maintained; for, as the property of the Holy Spirit is set forth under the metaphorical language of fire, so that, which has a tendency to damp its generous ardour, or prevent its influence, is compared to water. In a moral sense, whatever a man does, whatever motion he cherishes in his heart of the vicious species, whatever licence he gives to his passions beyond the bounds prescribed by the divine law, operates as water on a flame; it damps its ardour. And we see that those, who deviate from the paths of innocence, go on step by step, by little and little, till they are brought to actions of the most criminal nature, destructive of their health, destructive of their souls peace, and which afford them no pleasure, but a fearful looking for of the just judgement of the divine Being who will deal with every man according to his works. I say, every deviation

from the path of virtue will have this effect, to quench the spirit. Let us, therefore, by every possible means, endeavour to cherish this divine flame; it is a spark sent from heaven, and it is designed to purify us throughout, to make us vessels holy to the Lord, meet for an inheritance with the saints in light, and to celebrate the praises of heaven's King for evermore.

Quench not the Spirit. Yield to that monitor, which cautions you against even the appearance of evil, which is mercifully given unto man to direct him in his course in this world, and establish him, happily establish him, in the life that is to come, in the possession of that species of felicity, which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart, the unconverted heart, to conceive; but God hath revealed it to us, says the apostle, by his Spirit; for, the Spirit searches all things, yea, the deep things of God.

Quench not the Spirit. Add, to your faith, virtue; to virtue, knowledge; to knowledge,

knowledge, temperance; to temperance, brotherly kindness; to brotherly kindness, charity. Thus cherish the holy flame; yield to the salutary influence of the Spirit, that quickeneth to cherish in your breasts every heavenly and every friendly affection. The duty of a Christian, both with respect to his Creator and his fellow-creature, is set forth to us in the answer which our Lord gave to one who asked him, which is the greatest commandment? *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength.* This is the first and great commandment; and, the tendency of that Spirit which we have received, if we yield to its influence, would animate our affections toward that Being on whom we depend, and by whose blessings we are supported; raise our minds to contemplate the instances of God's power, righteousness, goodness, and truth, manifested; and enable us to ascend, as upon the wings of an eagle, in a meditation on the divine attributes; and inspire us with

that species of gratitude which it is not in the power of language to define.

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength. This is the first and great commandment; and this we should be instructed to do, if we yielded to the influences of, and did not quench, the Spirit, which is like a fire to enkindle within us a sacred flame of devotion, in which we may encompass the altar of the Almighty, in the multitude of his mercies, and approach acceptably the temple of his holiness.

Despise not prophesying. Now it is to be understood, that the manifestation of the Spirit does not supersede, or render useless, instrumental means. God has used both these means; he has spoken unto our fathers by the prophets; he has spoken to us, in these latter days, by his Son; he has sent his apostles to go forth, by his authority, in his name, to *preach the Gospel to the poor, to heal the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captive, the opening of the prison*

to them who were bound, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord and the day of vengeance of our God. He appointed some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the edifying of the body in that love by which it is united unto its holy head. Despise not therefore prophesying.

At the same time that we conceive this manifestation of the Spirit to be the primary law and rule of our actions, we must by no means despise instrumental means of instruction. All Scripture is given by the inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, to make the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works, and is able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith which is of Christ Jesus: we therefore accept the Scriptures as an inestimable blessing; for, in them we have an account of the various dispensations of divine wisdom, and in which we have the concurrent testimony of the apostles

tles and prophets of Jesus Christ to this fundamental principle of which we are most firmly persuaded.

Despise not prophesying. Let us improve, by every means which divine wisdom lays in the way, that we may be furnished to every good word and work, and increase in the knowledge of God.

Despise not prophesying ; prove all things ; hold fast that which is good. I conceive that the manifestation of the Spirit, given to every man to profit withal, is proposed to his rational understanding, and supersedes not the use of those rational powers by which he is distinguished ; but it qualifies him to exercise those powers in the best line and to the noblest purposes, to assert the dignity of his nature, and qualify him for those species of employments which are suited to the nature of an immortal spirit, made a little lower than the angels. He is to prove all things, and hold fast that which is good. The Father of lights appeals to the understanding and faculties of men ;
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when he makes a revelation to his creatures, he mercifully condescends to let himself down to the faculties they possess; he speaks to them in a language they understand. Therefore *prove all things*; distinguish properly between things and things in matters of the greatest importance, those which respect our final acceptance with the Judge of the whole earth. There are none that claim more our serious attention. They respect not only the welfare of our bodies in this world, but also the welfare of our souls in that eternity, to the confines of which we are nearly approaching. *Let every man, therefore, be fully persuaded in his own mind*; for, to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin. Let us not be content with being the nominal disciples of Christ, but let us consider ourselves as capable of judging in those matters that most nearly concern us; and, if any lack wisdom, let him ask it of him who giveth liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him. If we would
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be instructed in matters of everlasting importance, let us consult the sacred oracle, Christ, within us, the hope of glory, and who is said to be within every man unless he be a reprobate ; for, says the apostle, *examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves; know ye not yourselves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?*

It seems that our Saviour foresaw the divisions that would soon commence among mankind, and endeavoured to guard his disciples against the dogmas of men, and turn them to something within them as a sufficient guide and rule of their actions; for, says he, some will say, *lo! here is Christ; and others, lo! there is Christ*; he is to be found among the circle of professors; *lo! here is Christ*; others say, *lo! there is Christ*; but go not forth after them, for, the kingdom of God is within you. And again, we are told, that that, which is to be known of God, is manifest: — where? shall we consult the many commentators
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on the Old and New Testament? shall we traverse the earth to search into the opinions and modes of remote antiquity, in order to know what we shall do to be saved, or in order to know how we shall be accepted of God? no: that, which is to be known of God, is manifested in man,—within. — Having made these observations, I recommend them to your consideration.

Quench not the Spirit; despise not prophesying; prove all things, and hold fast that which is good. And may we, individually, according to that light and manifestation of the Spirit which is given unto us, be faithful to the revelations communicated to us thereby, so that we may have the testimony of a good conscience; and, when we have deviated, let us endeavour to possess those penitential dispositions, that, through Jesus Christ, we may be accepted of God, and made meet for the realms of glory, where, with the general assembly and church of the first-born, and the spirits of just men made perfect, we may contemplate

plate the perfections of the divine Being,
and may join the celestial host in the song
of Moses, the servant of God, and the
song of the Lamb, saying, *Great and mar-
vellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty ;
just and true are thy ways, thou King of
saints !*

PRAYER

P R A Y E R

A T T H E

CONCLUSION of the MEETING.

MOST gracious Father of all our mercies, unto whom we have access through Jesus Christ, thy Son, impress us with a humbling sense of our own unworthiness, and of thine infinite mercy and goodness, that we may approach thine holy altar, and humbly implore thee, the Fountain of wisdom and strength, that thou wouldst be pleased to enlighten our understandings, that we may see ourselves as we
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are seen of thee, and may abhor ourselves as in dust and ashes, feeling all those penitential affections which may render us the objects of thy forgiveness, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Be pleased to assist us with the aid of thy Holy Spirit, that, in the future part of our earthly pilgrimage, we may be able effectually to correct the errors which we have committed in the first. — That, under the influence of thy grace, we may pass the time of our sojourning here in fear, and may be strengthened to lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth most easily beset us, and run with patience the race which is set before us, in hope of attaining the eternal inheritance that fadeth not away. Thou most glorious Being, who art the source of strength to the righteous in all generations, and the tower of their defence; whose bread shall never fail them, and their waters shall be sure; look down upon us, and send us help out of thy sanctuary, and strengthen us out of thy Sion, that we may be strong in the

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the Lord, and in the power of his might, and be able to stand against the force of all those enemies who would impede our progress to the city of Jerusalem, the city of the saints solemnities. Be pleased, O Lord, to conduct us by thy counsel, strengthen us by thy grace, and afterwards take us into the realms of celestial glory; that, when thou shalt call us hence, we may enter into those regions where there is fulness of joy; and where, with the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven, and the spirits of just men made perfect, we may celebrate thy praise. It is with this view our souls are prostrate before thee; and we would ascribe to thee, glory, majesty, and dominion, and every other excellent attribute of which thou art worthy, both now and for evermore. Amen.

DISCOURSE

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DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE VIII.

WHEN I first entered under this roof, I felt as little disposition to vocal public service as any in the whole of this congregation could have possessed. Conscious of my own weakness and my many infirmities, I secretly wished to be strengthened by him, who is the Minister of the sanctuary and the glorious High Priest of the Christian religion; and indeed, unless we are favoured with his presence, we shall sit as it were in darkness and in the regions of the shadow of death. If we feel not the
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influence of his Holy Spirit, effectually to quicken us and inspire us with the spirit of devotion, in vain shall we lift up our hands and offer up the sacrifice of vocal prayer and praise unto him. It would be well if we had ever in remembrance, that of ourselves we are nothing, and of ourselves can do nothing, I mean nothing that is essentially good. Unless in our religious assemblies we are first ministered unto by the chief Shepherd and Bishop of souls, we cannot possibly minister one to another. This the apostles very evidently shew, particularly where one of them, alluding to his Gospel-ministry, says, *that we may comfort others with the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.* The disciple must first receive of his Lord, before he can dispense it to his brethren. And it is therefore that we profess, I say profess at least, to meet upon one common bottom, both ministers and those in a private station, to wait, in all singleness of heart, upon that Being, who regardeth the crying of the poor and

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the supplications of the needy ; who in a peculiar manner will look unto that man who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at his word. And, though *even the youths sh^d faint & be weary &c.* the youth may faint, and the young men utterly fall, yet those, who wait upon the Lord, shall renew their strength ; they shall mount upwards with wings as eagles ; they shall run, *Jo: 40-36-31* and not be weary ; they shall walk, and not faint.

It might perhaps be a little profitable for us to enquire what we are to understand by the renewing of our strength : *they, that wait upon the Lord, shall renew their strength.* I conceive this to be intended purely in a spiritual sense ; for, if natural strength be exhausted by labour or fatigue, it is to be recovered, in the ordinary course of God's providence, only by rest and the application of suitable nutritious food ; but those, who wait upon the Lord, shall renew their strength. Such are the nature and constitution of the human soul, that, in order to be preserved and live to God,

with a holy zeal for his name and for his cause, to be endowed with strength virtuously to resolve, and virtuously to pursue the just man's way, it must be renewed by food that is of a spiritual nature; that, as bread is a term for natural food, which is adapted to the support and well-being of our bodies, so this spiritual food, renewed unto us by the renewings of the Holy Ghost, is that bread which indeed the world knoweth not of. The world that lieth in wickedness, the sensualist, has no taste nor relish for that bread which cometh down from God out of heaven, and nourisheth the soul up unto eternal life.

Though, in the application which the disciples were instructed to make to the common Father of us all, outward blessings might be included with spiritual ones, yet doubtless, as the welfare of the soul is of infinitely more importance than the health and welfare of the body, in that part of the prayer, in which we are instructed to say — Give us this day our daily bread, is principally

principally intended that spiritual communication with the God of the spirits of all flesh, which imparts strength and vigour to the soul, animating it with a spirit of real devotion, that it can ascend above this lower and terrestrial sphere, — ascend as upon *the wings of an eagle*, a bird which is said to approach the nearest to that glorious natural luminary, the sun, in its flights. So, that soul, which possesses not only the spirit of real religion, but also feels its best affections animated towards God, will have this privilege over the mere professor of religion, that he will ascend as upon the wings of an eagle, ascend in an awful contemplation of the divine attributes, in a meditation upon spiritual subjects, in a strain of holy and fervent devotion; he will ascend the mount of the Lord's holiness, encompass his altar in the multitude of his mercies, and lift up his heart with his hands to that Being who inhabits the heavens.

Impressed with the importance of these truths, which we, as a religious society,

peculiarly profess, let us, friends, not come to these meetings merely with an expectation of receiving benefit, edification, or comfort, one from another. Let us not look one upon another with — *Men and brethren, what shall we do to be saved?* or, who shall shew us any good? But, sensible of our own respective wants, and impressed with a just idea of the solemnity of that business which we are professedly met about, let us, in the nothingness of self, in the silence of all flesh, reverently wait upon the Minister of the sanctuary; and to him let us look with all singleness of heart, and say, Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thus, possessing that affection of mind which is analogous to the affection of corporal hunger, as persons sensible of our wants, and also where those wants can be effectually supplied, we shall become the objects of that most desirable blessing, *blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.* It seems to me, beyond the least de-

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gree of doubt, that the royal psalmist felt this spiritual hunger ; he felt this sense of want, and the need that he stood in of a supply from the divine presence, when he speaks to this purport : *As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God ;* and again, *My soul thirsteth for God, yea, for the living God.* This passage of the royal psalmist seems to convey an idea to me of the soul which feels the weight of its own infirmities, the pressure and the importunity of surrounding temptations ; closely pressed, hunted as it were, pursued by its enemies, as the hart, when its strength is nearly exhausted, and almost ready to faint and drop with thirst, to whom nothing could be more precious than a spring of water : therefore, as the hunted hart panteth after the water-brooks, so that soul, which is sensible of its infirmities, and feels the pressure of surrounding temptations, longs after that immortal spring of goodness, where it may be refreshed and strengthened, and escape from its ene-

mies, to pursue its course successfully, and ultimately to finish it with joy.

I wish we were more and more impressed with a just sense of what we are, that the pride of human nature were more effectually humbled; — that we might look up to him who is the source of all that is excellent and good, and, to use the language of the holy penman, *feel after the Lord, if haply we might find him*. And he, whom the fervent soul is in search after, is not afar off; he, whom thou longest for, will suddenly come unto his temple; but, *who shall abide the day of his coming? who shall stand when he appeareth?* When the soul is thus favoured with a spiritual communion and intellectual sense of the supreme Being, it is then that every thing that is exalted becomes abased; the loftiness of man is brought down; he sees himself as a worm, and no man; as unworthy the least of his mercies and truth; and therefore, in this view of himself and of the supreme Being, he will break forth, in the language of
Job,

Job, *I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear*;—so far the speculatist may go, so far the theorist may collect a system of faith; but, he not only heard of him by the hearing of the ear, but, says he, *now mine eye seeth thee*. He had formed just notions of the supreme Being; he was enlightened to have just ideas of himself. *I have heard of thee*, says he, *by the hearing of the ear*; but *now mine eye seeth thee*; *wherefore I repent and abhor myself in dust and ashes*. This is that humbling sense which we all of us should possess of ourselves, if, in the sense which our Saviour intended, we were favoured to see God: *Blessed* (says he) *are the pure in heart, for they shall see God*; which certainly must be intended in a peculiar and spiritual sense, for he is not the object of our senses. To be sure, in one respect, it may be said, the pure and the impure see God; they have a sensible demonstration of his being in the works of creation, and of the attributes of power, wisdom, and goodness; but they have not that animating, that intellectual,

telleſtual, viſion, which is the bleſſing of the pure in heart: *Bleſſed are the pure in heart, for they ſhall ſee God.* Let none be ſo weak as to imagine this is to be underſtood in the full-eſt ſenſe of the word; for, in the ſupreme Being *we live, and move, and have our being*; he comprehends all things, and is comprehended by nothing. *If thou aſcend up to heaven, he is there; if thou go down to the depth of the ſea, he is there.* The darkneſs and the light are both alike to him; he is infinite in all his attributes; he is omnipreſent; he pervadeth every part of his vaſt extended empire; there are no bounds to Omnipotence; he remains the ſame from generation to generation; with him, the perfect King, there is no variableneſs, neither any ſhadow of turning. When we contemplate with propriety the attributes of this Being through the ſanctification of the Spirit, then we experience what it is to have a pure heart, a heart poſſeſſing purity of intention, whoſe faculties and powers are placed on a pure object, and

and all under the influence of the Holy Spirit, and under the government of those laws which the infinitely-wise Legislator hath adapted to promote the happiness of all his creatures, and to prepare them for the glory, and the dignity, that is the peculiar privilege of the pure in heart; the enjoyment of that pure state of being, which we see now but darkly, through a glass, where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest; where the society of the just are employed in contemplating the attributes of the eternal King, and join in the solemn song of Moses, the servant of God, and of the Lamb, saying, *Great and marvellous are thy works, O Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints!*

PRAYER

P R A Y E R

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CONCLUSION OF THE MEETING.

MOST gracious God, as of ourselves we can do nothing, be pleased, we humbly beseech thee, to look down from the heavens, the habitation of thy holiness, favourably upon us at this season. Do thou lift up the light of thy glorious countenance upon us, that in thy light, O Lord, we may see light, and that our understandings may be effectually informed respecting those things which belong to our peace and

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to thy glory ; that our understandings may not only be enlightened to see, but also our hearts strengthened and animated to engage in the work of righteousness, which is peace, and the effect of it quietness and assurance for ever.

O most merciful Father, look down upon us, vile unworthy creatures ; inflame our hearts with a sense of gratitude to thee, the Author and Fountain of every good and perfect gift, of all those blessings which we have received, and have so much misapplied, in the course of our short pilgrimage ; that, under a just sense of thy majesty, of thy mercy and goodness, and of our own weakness, we may be induced to approach thy holy altar, and put up our supplications unto thee, that thou wouldest be pleased to send us health out of thy sanctuary, and strengthen us as out of Zion.

Thou, that hast been a rock and a place of refuge for the righteous in all generations, look down, we beseech thee, upon those that are under the pressure of any species

cies of affliction and probation, those whose hearts are right towards thee, who are going to Mount Sion, and have had their feet directed thither. Oh! be pleased to afford these the aid of thy Spirit in the moments of human weakness, and in their solemn adverse season. Lift up the light of thy countenance upon them. O Lord, preserve us all in the course of our pilgrimage through this vale of tears; guide us, by the light of thy counsel, and afterwards receive us into the realms of celestial glory, where, having been previously effectually purged, sanctified, and justified, in and through thy Son, our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, we may join the heavenly society, and for ever be with the saints and angels, and spirits of just men made perfect, to laud and praise thy great and excellent name; to whom, for all thy mercies, be the dominion, thanksgiving, blessing, and praise, not only now, but henceforth and for evermore. Amen.

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE IX.

THIS *do, and thou shalt live.* These words of our Lord revived in my remembrance at this meeting, and I have been led to advert to the occasion of their being delivered. It is, I think, written in one of the evangelists : *Behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit everlasting life?* It is written, that he meant to tempt him ; it follows of course, that his motive, in proposing this question, was not of the best kind ; that it was not with a view of gaining information, but, if possible, to ensnare him, and
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take an occasion against him. But, our Lord, upon this as well as upon every other occasion, manifested that wisdom which he possessed above all other men, that wisdom which directed all that he did and all that he said; *he spoke as never man spoke*; he spoke with peculiar authority, and not as the scribes. Instead of making an immediate and direct answer to this question, he previously proposed one to him. *What, says he, is written in the law? how readeſt thou?* To which the lawyer replied, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself.* To which Jesus said, *Thou haſt answered right; this do, and thou shalt live.* It seemeth to me, that this lawyer might apprehend, as some others did who had a prejudice against Jesus, and the worthy cause which he promoted upon the earth, that he came to destroy the law and the prophets, and to preach another law essentially different from that which had been delivered

delivered to them; or that he dispensed with the obligation of that, which, by way of distinction, is called the moral law. But our Saviour evinced that he came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it; he told them, that heaven and earth should sooner pass away than one jot or tittle of the law should fail. Now the law which our Saviour intended, when he says, *What is written in the law? how readest thou?* could not be any part of the new Testament, because none of that had been written; he therefore intended that law of commandments which is of universal and indispensable obligation, and is immutable: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.* Now we are instructed that love is the fulfilling of the law; but in what sense is it the fulfilling of the law? why, whoever possesses the love of God will be induced, by the best motives, to study his will, and to discharge the obligation of his severe

ral religious duties to him.—If he loves his neighbour, he will be induced to desire his welfare on all occasions. He will seek the interest and good of his neighbour; he will not only be just, but merciful, kind, and loving. And this definition perfectly agrees with that passage where it is said, *Love worketh no ill to his neighbour.*

Now I conceive that there is no other way for us to obtain that most desirable object of being accepted of our Creator, who is the Judge of the whole earth, than to observe those sacred commandments on which hang all the law and the prophets. And it seems to me, that there is much more of the love of God and the love of our neighbour assumed, or professed, than is really possessed at heart by mankind. The pride, the haughtiness, the irreverence, with which they appear in the presence of the omniscient Being, bespeak that they possess not the love of him in their hearts. Ambition, avarice, and the various species of vanity which have invaded the several classes of mankind,

mankind, bespeak that they are void of the love of the God of heaven and of the whole earth. They, who rise up early, and go to bed late, in order to add house to house, and barn to barn, and bag to bag, and land to land, till there is nothing left for the poor of the earth ; who improve every opportunity to monopolize as much as possible the blessings of heaven, and whose thirst seems to be inexhaustible ; who are prompted by avarice, which is a passion that increases with the increase of years, and increases with the increase of riches ; manifest that the love of God is not in them : for, the apostle saith, *If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him*, by which I understand, if a man is possessed of an inordinate love of the things of this world ; if they so take hold of his affections, and ingross his attention, as to steal from him that awe of God which ever ought to pervade his soul ; if it prevents his attention to the statutes and the commandments of heaven, and prevents his

walking humbly and reverently through this short scene of his pilgrimage; it is, and may be justly called, that kind of love of the world which excludes the love of the supreme Being.

But, while it is so little, I fear, possessed at heart, much is professed by all the several denominations of religion; however they may differ with respect to speculative tenets, certain rituals, and modes of devotion, and articles of faith, they all profess to love God, all acknowledge the obligation of that and of the subsequent commandment; but it is to be feared that we often treat the supreme Being in a manner similar to that which we use one towards another. Among mankind, there are great and specious pretences of friendship, when perhaps there is but little really possessed at heart; and indeed some, under the semblance of love and friendship, have only waited for an opportunity to stab the reputation, or injure their neighbour in his property or person, with security from the lash of the law.

law. There are, who have made this profession as a cloak of maliciouſneſs; and, while they have ſaid, Art thou in health, brother? have had a dagger concealed beneath the black diſguiſe. Now we are abundantly inſtructed, that, though we may, and too frequently do, deceive one another, and paſs off baſe metal for ſterling coin, yet it is impoſſible we ſhould deceive that awful Being with whom we have to do; he ſees not as man ſees; he looks beyond the veil of every covering; he beholds the latent receſſes of the human heart. Let us therefore not be deceived, for God is not mocked; that which every man ſows, that ſhall he reap; if he ſows unto the fleſh, he ſhall of the fleſh reap corruption; but, if he ſows unto the Spirit, of the Spirit he ſhall reap life everlaſting.

In vain ſhall we call upon the name of the Lord, in vain ſhall we ſacrifice upon his altar, in vain ſhall we make many prayers, and ſpread our hands towards the habita-

tion of his holiness, unless we possess the love of him in the highest; and which, whoever possesses, he will manifest in the various branches of life, his conversation, and commerce among mankind. He will conscientiously discharge his religious, his social, his relative, duties; and, in the sphere of his movement, he will manifest the love of God by keeping his commandments. *If ye love me, (says our Lord,) keep my commandments;* and, if we would really become objects of his complacency, if we would be loved and honoured of that Being who made us for the purpose of his own glory, let us attend to the solemn injunction of the Author of the Christian religion: *Keep you therefore my commandments and abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.*

Let us not therefore apprehend, that any articles of faith, that any rituals of devotion, or any form of prayer that can possibly be uttered, can be a substitute for this affection

affection of heart towards God, and which the consideration of his attributes will the most powerfully engage us to possess. We have nothing that we have not received; he, the Ancient of days, is the sole proprietor of the universe, the Lord of hosts; he is one, and his name is one. We, the inhabitants of his footstool, are but tenants at will. The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof, and the cattle of a thousand hills are his. And, seeing we possess nothing but what we have derived from him, that all the blessings which we have received are owing to his bounty and goodness, we ought not to boast as if we had not received them, but with all humility acknowledge his manifold goodness, and to offer unto him the sacrifice of an undivided heart. It is the language of Wisdom to the sons of men, *My son, give me thy heart*. Our best affections will be engaged; then, indeed, we shall possess the very spirit of devotion; for, whoever possesses not the love of God possesses not the spirit of devo-

tion ; his hands may be lifted up towards the habitation of his holiness, but his heart lies groveling on the earth ; he is worshipping the gods of this world, silver and gold, and therefore the lifting up of his hands and the verbal oblation of his mouth will not be acceptable incense upon that sacred altar, whereof those who serve the tabernacle have no right to partake.

I wish that we might improve such seasons as this in a particular manner, to contemplate the divine attributes, to reflect and think upon his name, to recollect the instances of his goodness, of his power, and of his wisdom, that so we may feel our affections more and more set upon things that are above, less and less upon things which are beneath, which are but of a transitory nature, and which perish with the using. This was the injunction of the apostle : *Set your affection on things above, and not on things on the earth.* This indeed is to be spiritually minded, as it is written,

to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

If we were really concerned to possess this love of God, it would not only manifest itself in the various branches of our religious duty, but also those of a social and relative kind. I think we are somewhere told, that, for a man to see his fellow-creature in distress, and shut up his bowels against him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? and the apostle reasons very aptly: *If, says he, we love not our brother, whom we have seen, how shall we love God, whom we have not seen, who is not an object of sense, who is inapproachable? no man hath seen him, nor can see him; and, as we are incapable of rendering any thing unto God, who is absolutely perfect, it seems that he accepts of the good offices we do for one another as if they had been done unto him, and he was capable of being benefited by them.* This is illustrated by our Lord with respect to those who had neglected him: *I was an-hungered, and ye fed me not; naked, and*

and ye clothed me not ; sick and in prison, and ye visited me not ; to which they made this reply : *When saw we thee an-hungered, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee ? — Inasmuch*, says he, *as ye did it not to one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it not unto me* ; and again, to those who received him, it is said, *I was an-hungered, and ye fed me ; naked, and ye clothed me*, or words to the same import ; *I was sick and in prison, and ye visited me*. Now these possessed that modesty which is peculiar to good men ; they answered : *When saw we thee an-hungered, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and ministered unto thee ? Inasmuch*, says he, *as ye have done it to one of the least of these little ones, you have done it to me*. — Who are these little ones ? I conceive that we are all, by creation, God's little ones ; he stands in the relation of a father to all ranks and classes of human beings ; he of one blood has made all nations to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds

bounds of their habitation ; and, as he has made them of one blood, so he looks upon them with an everlasting love, which discriminates not the persons of men ; for, he is no respecter of persons ; but, in every nation, he, that feareth God and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him. And, that the little ones, in this place, intend not any peculiar class, to me is very evident ; because, we are under an obligation to do good to the unrighteous as well as the righteous, to the unjust as well as the just ; not only to be loving to our friends, but to love our enemies, to do good to all ; to put up our prayers, not for this or that peculiar class of persons, but to address our prayers for the vast community of creatures : — *I exhort, says the apostle, that prayers and supplications be made for all men ; for kings, and for all that are in authority ; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty.* We are to pray for the righteous, that they may be confirmed in their ways ; — for the wicked, that they may

may be reformed. We are to pray not only for our friends, for, if we love them that love us, what do we more than others? It is natural to have an affection for them who have an affection for us ; but we must go farther than this, we must love them that hate us, and pray for them that persecute us. If we possess this spirit of mind, if love prevails to all, then we shall ever have occasion, as our Lord said, rather to rejoice than to be sorrowful if we shall be mal-treated by those whose interest we have endeavoured to promote : — *Blessed are ye* (says our Lord) *when men shall say all manner of evil against you, falsely, for my sake ; rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven.* Now I wish that this affection of love, the love of God and of our neighbour, were more really felt at heart than it appears to be.

The love of our neighbour means not, in the common acceptation of the term, the people whose local habitation is near ours, and who lend us some assistance, as

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we are instructed in the case of the Samaritan and the poor Jew, when it was asked our Lord, who is my neighbour? It seemed good sometimes to him to answer the questions proposed to him by a parable. It was peculiar to those times and that part of the world; and, so frequent was it, that it is said of our Lord, that without a parable spake he not unto them. A certain man, says he, went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Here was an object for Christian benevolence to exercise itself upon; here was an instance in which the love of our neighbour should have been exercised; but it seems that those, who ought to have possessed the greatest share of friendly affections, those who waited upon the service of the altar, wanted this affection. The priest passed by, the Levite followed his example; those, who ought to have been the first to set an example of mercy, loving-kindness, and charity,

charity, possessed not that affection, which would engage us, by every means in our power, to relieve the distressed and wipe away the tears of the afflicted. In short, so much stress is laid upon the possession of this affection, and exercising it in charity and kindness one towards another, that it is said to be the religion which is pure and undefiled, not a religion of speculation and theory: *Pure religion, and undefiled before God and the Father, is this: to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep ourselves unspotted from the world.*

The priest passed by; the Levite also passed by. At length, it seems, a Samaritan came that way; and, though there had long subsisted an enmity between the Jews and the Samaritans, yet he possessed so much of the love of God and his neighbour, that it overcame the prejudice of his education; though the object that claimed this attention was a Jew, he took compassion on him in this state, and did not, as we often do to one another, pour in a mix-

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ture of wormwood and gall, to aggravate the wounds, rather than the oil of love, to alleviate and assuage them. He poured in oil and wine; and not only so, but he looked forwards, and provided for his future subsistence; he sent him to an inn, and, when he departed, directed the host to take care of him, saying, Whatsoever thou spendest, when I come again, I will repay thee.

This is set forth as an example to us, which we should by all means attempt to imitate. We should be divested of every species of prejudice, and endeavour to have our hearts more enlarged in the love of God; and, the more we are enlarged in the love of God, the more shall we possess the love of our neighbour, and more promote the interest of the vast community of mankind, and be more disposed to imitate the example of the Saviour of mankind among the poor and despised, who was, on that account, in reproach, called the friend of publicans and sinners. We should exercise our gifts

gifts for the promotion of righteousness on the earth, to prevent every calamity, and promote the interest of society. It should be the study of our lives, and our delight, to go about doing good. I am thankful I possess that spirit of charity that forgets all the distinctions of names, of rank, and of dignity. As men are stripped of these distinctions, and remember that they stand in the relation of children to the Father of mankind, so will their love and benevolence be; if we possessed this affection, we should endeavour to promote concord among the several ranks of society.

I wish we may see the restoration of those primæval days, when the morning-stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy. — God is love; that is a term which is most aptly applied, and most gloriously illustrates the attributes of the supreme Being. We are the offspring of his benevolence; it was to communicate happiness, it was from the source of his infinite benevolence, that he created us, and
endued

endued us with capacities of partaking of the happiness of immortality. He has called us to keep his statutes, that we may possess a species of happiness inconceivable to us at present, and which, in its duration, will run parallel with the endless ages of eternity.

Seeing we have received every thing we possess from him, let us be prostrate at his footstool; let us, in all the emotions of filial piety, approach his altar, in the multitude of his mercies, and lift up our hands to the habitation of his holiness;—not only our hands, but also our hearts. *Lift up your hands and hearts to God*, I think the Psalmist says, *who inhabits the heavens*. — These will be seasons of solemnity. We shall enter into the closets of our hearts, and shut the door; we shall be lifted up, as on the wings of an eagle, in the contemplation of his attributes, agreeable to the declaration of the prophet, who spoke in the name of the Lord: *Though the youth may faint, and the young men utterly fall, yet they*

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who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint. In holy fervour of spirit, we shall be able to enter into that within the vail, and in the depth of humiliation we shall worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. Thus shall we be qualified to join the celestial song: *Glory to God in the highest; on earth, - peace; and good will towards men.*

Under the sense of these things, the manifestation of his presence, and a participation of that food which is of a spiritual nature, the bread that cometh down from God out of heaven, we shall be qualified to approach him, not in a formal manner, but the language of our hearts will be:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us, this day, our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us; and, lead us not into temptation, but deliver

(24 .)

*deliver us from evil; for, thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory, for ever and
ever. Amen.*

P R A Y E R

A T T H E

CONCLUSION of the MEETING

PRAYER

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(211 .)

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ever. Amen.

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S H T T A

CONCLUSION of the MEETING

from an original **P 2** **PRAYER**

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CONCLUSION of the MEETING.

MOST gracious God, inspire us more and more with suitable affections towards thee, that we may find access to thy presence, and offer up the acceptable incense of thanksgiving and of praise. O thou omniscient Being, who knowest us altogether as we are, grant, we beseech thee, that, under the influence of the light of the Gospel of thy Son, we may see ourselves as we are seen of thee; that,
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in the depth of reverence, we may abhor ourselves in dust and ashes; that the remembrance of our past transgressions, which have loudly bespoken our ingratitude to thee, thou most adorable Being, may be blotted out; and that we may feel that contrition of soul, which becomes every penitent who is the proper object of thy mercy. O let the consideration of thine attributes and of our own unworthiness humble us yet more and more in thy presence; that, possessed with a filial fear of thee, we may in future be more circumspect in our goings; and that we may seek, and be able to discriminate, the just man's way, and to walk in it, which, as the bright and shining light, shineth more and more unto the perfect day. O grant that we may be more and more enamoured with the love of virtue; that we may more and more prefer the narrow and the strait gate, which leads to life; rather than the broad way of sensual indulgence, that leads to the gates of death, and ultimately will in-

volve such as persevere therein in the pit of perdition.

O most adorable Jesus, "increase our faith and love, and increase the friendly affections of our souls one towards another, that we may be disposed, instead of burdening others; to bear each others burdens; instead of casting about to ensnare and deceive, we may look upon our neighbours interest as our own; that we may promote the interest of righteousness in the world; that, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, through grace, we may walk before thee so, in this world, as to have an ample hope of being received into the assembly of the just in the life to come."

O thou, who art the preserver of men; influence us more and more by thy Spirit, that we may lay aside every weight and every burden, and the sin which doth so easily beset us; and run with patience the race which is set before us; and so to run; as that we may obtain the crown immortal, that shall never fade away. While we are
sojourners

sojourners in this world, and in the land of the shadow of death, open to us the brighter prospect of a fairer day ; that, whatsoever may be our lot in this pilgrimage, whether persecution or distress, we may have an interest in thy Son, as a hope firm and steadfast, as an anchor in this tempestuous ocean. Grant that, when the days of our pilgrimage are concluded, we may receive the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls, where the righteous shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars, for ever and ever.

O thou most righteous Being, in a sense of thy goodness we would approach thy altar, and ascribe to thee might, majesty, and dominion, with every other excellent and adorable attribute, now, henceforth, and for evermore. Amen.

...in this world, and in the land of
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DISCOURSE X.

UNDER an apprehension of duty, I have frequently laboured among you, in word and doctrine, for a series of years. What effect it has had on those who have heard me, I cannot presume to determine; if I were, indeed, to judge by appearances, I should conclude the obvious effects to be but little. But, there is a matter on which I am fully competent to determine: my motives have been of the best kind, the love of God and the love of my fellow-creatures; that love which worketh no ill, but would, by all possible methods, promote the essential

tial interest of its neighbours ; and, having from time to time discharged what I apprehended to be my religious duty, I have therein found great peace. This, to myself at least, has been the effect of my public labours ; and, though it is probable, that what I have sometimes delivered may have been more or less similar to that which I have aforetime delivered, yet I hope, that even a repetition of doctrines and advices, which we are urged to deliver from a sense of duty, may not be as water spilt upon a stone, but may have a tendency (if not to convey any material information to the understanding) to stir up at least the pure mind by way of remembrance.

We have heard much ; we have had line upon line, and precept upon precept ; and there have been sent among us, who, as good scribes, out of their treasury have brought forth things new and old. But, the essential and important doctrines, which respect in particular our practical duties, make, it is to be feared, but a slight impression

pression on the minds of men, even upon those who are very fond of hearing, and have perhaps much to say concerning the mysteries of faith; who, whilst they lay much stress upon speculative opinions, have possessed too little of that real Christian love and zeal, which manifests itself by a conduct consistent with the commandments of the Author of the Christian dispensation. We want to be stirred up, to be excited, to do that, which we want not to be instructed it is our duty to do. But, if there be any, in this auditory, whose understandings may have been bewildered in a long and tedious pursuit of speculative notions; or who have attempted, though but with little success, to investigate abstruse points, and to comprehend mysteries which the wisdom of the Holy Ghost may see meet to conceal from the foolishness of men, (the prying curiosity of the creature, who is more apt to inquire than to obey;) if there be any such, who are yet unsatisfied with regard to those grand and essential points,

upon

upon which their acceptance with the common Father of the human race depends : if there be any who are under the pressure of manifold sins and transgressions, are in doubt with respect to those means which are necessary to be pursued, in order that their transgressions may be forgiven of God, and that they may be accepted of him ; if there be any, who, in the anguish of their souls, have their hands upon their loins, with *what shall I do to be saved ?* it seems to me to be my duty to state to them a case, nearly perhaps as we have it represented in the holy Scriptures, respecting one, formerly, who proposed a question of this sort.

How shall I come before the Lord ? or wherewithal shall I bow myself before the most high God ? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings and calves of a year old ? shall I present him with ten thousands of rivers of oil ? shall I give him my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul ? — Now it seems to me, beyond
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all controversy, that, by *coming before the Lord, bowing before the most high God*, was meant, the bowing before him, or coming before him, acceptably. What shall I do to recommend myself to the divine notice, to have the load of my sins taken off? my transgressions cancelled from the book of his remembrance? In answer to this, he was shewn that that which God required of man, as essential to his acceptance with him, was easily to be apprehended, and within the compass of his power to perform; that is to say, of man, favoured with the manifestation of the Spirit of God, and strengthened by his grace.

He hath shewed thee, O man! what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? Here our essential duties are summed up under three heads, which indeed comprehend much. — The first is *justice*. A man must be morally just before he can be religiously good; whereas we oft-times see the divine order perverted, and
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that men are more zealous to be connected with parties, and more zealous for the interest of a sect, than to maintain even the character of common honesty.

Do justly.—Now the obligation of justice is void of any kind of perplexity. We no sooner reflect upon the relation man stands in to man, but the propriety of justice is clear. We are without excuse if we neglect to do justice; and, though this perhaps may come under the appellation of what is called a moral duty, let us not think meanly of moral duties; for, notwithstanding the variety of speculative doctrines published here and there, and curious distinctions made upon points of religion, what is the state of moral justice among us? Let us look abroad among mankind; shall we not have cause to apprehend, of many, that their wits are employed, and time laid out, in planning schemes to take advantage of their neighbours? in laying a foundation to raise themselves on the spoils of others? to make themselves rich, and thereby fall
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into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in sin and perdition? — 10

It seems to be the study of a great part of mankind to outwit and deceive the other; instances of notorious breaches of justice strike us on every hand, and every where, and which people are the more prompted to commit from a desire of a luxurious and pompous mode of life, which is too generally prevalent among mankind. The disease of luxury is almost epidemical; — through all classes there seems to be an emulation to excel, and many burst in the attempt.

I am concerned at heart, friends, to revive in your remembrance the obligation of justice. We must be just and righteous before we shall be good; and it seems that our Lord laid a peculiar stress on what are called moral doctrines, that of justice and that of mercy; insomuch that he says, *If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses*; and again he says, (which is worthy of note; it is called
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the golden rule ; it is a law, a general law, of action, worthy of the Most High to give, and of his Son to promulgate among the inhabitants of the earth,) *Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.* Here is the essence of all the best human laws or statutes that ever were composed in the world. All human laws, so far as they are consistent with propriety, are founded in, and consistent with, this general law, which comprehends all relations and connections among mankind : — *Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.* If we would wish to appear with honesty to our neighbours, let us act in the manner we would wish them to act to us. If we would wish them not to take advantage of us, let us not take advantage of them. As, in a time of distress, we would wish to have the sympathy of our neighbours and the hand of relief extended to us, let us not forget the needy in the time of our prosperity, but do to them as we would they should do to us. If we wish,

wish, being in danger, to be apprised of that danger, that we might not fall into destruction, let us warn and admonish others. There is a mutual dependence runs through society, and it is our duty to advertise one another in hours of peril ; and, where we can do no positive good, we should endeavour to prevent all possible evil. These are duties which we want not so much to be convinced of, as to be effectually incited to perform. But, such is the weakness of human nature, that people are more fond of taking up with subscriptions to articles of faith, and of attendance to ordinances, and wish to get rid of their sins in that way, and herein shew a great zeal ; but that falls short of the rectitude which the gospel enjoins, and is the end of the law, and the end of the coming of Christ, and of offering himself a sacrifice for sin to produce order and righteousness among all ranks of men. This was one of the ends of his coming ; and, however specious our professions may be, how-

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ever deeply we may enter into the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, yet, if we possess not the spirit of charity, and motives to justice and benevolence, what is it? *If I speak*, says the apostle, *with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal; and, though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.* By charity, I conceive, is not meant a gust of passion that would prompt a man occasionally to do a good act, but a settled principle of goodness and benevolence, that would prompt a man to general justice, and not to be just only, but also good. *If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, it will profit me nothing; if I have all faith, and understand all mysteries, yet, says he, if I have not charity, it profiteth me nothing;* to shew, that, in order to our actions being denominated good, they must proceed from a good motive

motive and principle. He shews that the semblance of charity is nothing: *If I give my body to be burned, and my goods to the poor, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.* Therefore, let us endeavour to be really that we seem to be. Let us not content ourselves with the semblance of holiness, and charity, but let us hold the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience; for, it is possible people may conceive right notions of things, and yet, for want of receiving them as a principle influencing their actions, they may hold the truth, but hold it in unrighteousness; but he, who holds the mystery of faith as he ought to hold it, holds it in a pure conscience.

Our Saviour, in his ministry, was gentle in his address, and persuasive in his language. When he addressed the publicans and sinners, he found more openness to receive the gospel among this rank of people, than those who had the form of godliness, but denied the power thereof; inso-

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was the friend of publicans and sinners ; for which conduct he gave this essential reason, that he came not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance. *Where the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.* Among these people there was a disposition to receive him ; and, among other things which the messengers of John were required to testify that they had seen, was, that the poor had the gospel preached to them. How did this friend of publicans and sinners, who spoke with so much gentleness, behave when he came to address the superior characters, in all the pomp of their sanctity, who made broad the phylacteries, who were zealous for the written and oral traditions of their fathers ? *O ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell ! Ye are like whited sepulchres, which, indeed, appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead mens bones.* And he takes occasion to instruct his followers, *unless, says he, your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees,*

sees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Now, what was the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees? It seems they appeared more than a little zealous for the rituals of the Mosaic dispensation, were punctual to the time of prayer, specious in their address to the Majesty of heaven, and performed all the service of the Jewish tabernacle; but, though they possessed the righteousness of the law, they were strangers to moral righteousness. *Ye pay tithe of mint, and annise, and cummin,* says he, *but what have you neglected to do? Ye have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgement, mercy, and truth: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone:* by which, he does not reprehend them for their performance of the rituals of that dispensation, which were obligatory until the sacrifice of Christ, yet he shews the superiority of moral and practical truths, mercy and judgement. *These ought ye to have done;* and, therefore, in point of order, when the prophet answers

the question proposed to him, the first is, *do justice*: which I conceive not only comprehends the obligation we owe to one another, but the obligation we owe to the Supreme Being. While I am zealous to plead for the obligation of justice among men, and the discharge of the duties of social relations, I would by no means forget that there is a justice due to the glorious father of all we possess. He has made us, not we ourselves; we are his offspring; he has communicated to us a variety of temporal and spiritual blessings, and we ought, in point of gratitude, in point of justice, to make a proper application of those blessings, to render to him the duty that arises from the relation that we stand in to him as his children, the offspring of the everlasting Father; and, therefore, he calls upon us, *my son, give me thy heart*. He would not require that of us which is not in point of justice our duty to comply with: give me thy heart; give me the best of thy affections; manifest thy love to me by keep-
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ing my commandments, as a good steward; for, we are all, all ranks and classes of beings are, stewards of the manifold grace of God; and it is required of stewards that they be found faithful. The time is approaching, when it will be said, *give an account of thy stewardship; for, thou mayst be no longer steward.* Let us, therefore, ask ourselves this question,— what have we received? what improved? and what misapplied? and then ask, what owest thou to my Lord? The debt is immense. We have received much: our improvements have been little; but wherewith shall we come before the Most High? In what way will the Father of mercies be propitious to us? Let us first confess our faults; let us not cover our sins, or seek to hide them; for, he that hides his sins shall not prosper: let us acknowledge our sins; let us encompass his altar in the multitude of his mercies; let us possess the penitential affection of the poor publican, while the Pharisee could boast of his fasting twice in the week, giving alms of all he possessed,

and not being as other men, even as the poor publican. Notwithstanding these pompous words, he was not accepted. The poor publican had nothing to plead, no merit to recommend him; and, therefore, under the contemplation of the infinite Majesty he was about to approach, he had not courage to lift up his hands towards the habitation of his holiness; but, sighing, said, *Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner!* If we possess these penitential affections, we shall become the objects of that mercy which our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ exemplified in his ministry, in his character, in his crucifixion, in his resurrection, and ascension into glory. It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners; and we have all sinned, and fallen short of the glory of God: we have done the things we ought not to have done, and left undone the things we ought to have done. And, such is the marvellous condescension of him who inhabits eternity, that

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he sent forth his Son, not with a message of unrelenting vengeance, not to assign to fallen spirits a habitation in those realms where the worm shall never die, and the fire shall never be quenched, but with the glorious and interesting message, that, whosoever forsakes his sins shall be forgiven of his Father who is in heaven, and whosoever frames his life and manners, in consequence of it, with this penitential affection, he shall possess that inheritance which is unspeakably glorious ; his sins shall be cancelled from the book of the divine remembrance, and shall not stand against him in the judgement of the last day. If we confess our sins, God is merciful and just to forgive us our sins. I distinguish between the forgiveness of sins and the conversion of our souls. The forgiveness of sins is purely owing to the mediation and the intercession of Jesus Christ ; but the work of conversion requires and calls upon the object to be a co-worker with the influence of grace to purify the soul, and turn

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its feet into the just man's path, which is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. Therefore, saith our Lord, *my Father worketh, and I work : work ye also.*

He came to his own, and his own received him not ; but, to as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to as many as believed on his name. Therefore, we experience the remission of sins through the forbearance of God ; but the work of sanctification is not yet completed ; the office of the Mediator is not only to procure for us the remission of sins past, but it is to correct those vices in our very souls which the gospel-axe is laid to the root of, the corrupt tree in us, the root of our corrupt affections ; and, till this has effectually done its office, we shall not be cleansed from all unrighteousness. God Almighty grant, of his infinite mercy, that we may not be content under any specious pretences of religion, but that we may seek to attain that
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 purity

purity of heart without which we cannot enter the habitation of those glorious regions, where nothing that defiles, or that worketh abomination, or maketh a lie, can enter. It is the pure in heart who shall see God: it is those that have been reformed from the errors of their ways, and whose affections are raised from earth to heaven, from natural to spiritual objects; these are of the number of the Lord's redeemed, who, when the time of their conflict shall be ended on earth, shall stand upon Mount Sion to celebrate the praises of the great King for ever and ever! I feel my heart enlarged with the love of the gospel, with the benevolent spirit which ushered the Saviour into the world: *Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, and good-will to men!*

We all stand in the relation of brethren to one another. We all stand in the relation of children to the universal Parent. We are his by creation. The Lord grant we may be his by adoption: that we may
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be sealed by him to the day of complete redemption : that we may be cleansed from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit : that we may be influenced by the most pure motives to conduct ourselves by his commandments here, and have a well-grounded hope of living with him hereafter ! I commend us to the protection of our Almighty Father ; and, finally, wish us to retain, in our remembrance, these important articles, that they may be written, as with the point of a diamond, upon the tablet of our hearts. *He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good !* Consult the sacred oracles : thou wilt be instructed in that which thou art to know, qualified to perform that which thou art to do, be enlarged in thy best faculties and powers to enter into those regions where the inhabitants shall not say I am sick ; for, the people who dwell therein are forgiven their iniquity.

I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build us up in the most holy faith, and to give us an inheritance

heritance among all them who are sanctified. *He hath shewn unto thee, O man, what is good, and what the Lord requires of thee; to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.* Add, to your faith, virtue; to virtue, knowledge; to knowledge, temperance; to temperance, patience; to patience, godliness; to godliness, brotherly-kindness; and, to brotherly-kindness, charity: and, if these things be in you, and abound among you, they shall make you that you shall be neither barren, nor unfruitful, in the saving knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ!

DISCOURSE

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 Christ!

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE XI.

I*t is appointed unto men once to die.* This is one of those propositions which no man is so weak as to deny. But the sacred penman proceeds farther,—*and, after death, cometh the judgement.* This, also, is a proposition which is of course admitted, in terms, by every one who professes to be a Christian, or a disciple of Christ; and, indeed, this proposition is of the most awful and affecting nature. We must all stand before the judgement-seat of Christ, and receive a recompence of reward according as our

our works have been. A Judge, who is infallible, who will not deceive, nor can possibly be deceived; he taketh cognizance not only of our outward actions, but he penetrates the very thoughts and intents of all our hearts; and, seeing that he will not condemn the innocent, nor acquit the guilty,—on this reflection, methinks, it would be well for us, as it were, to lay our hands upon our hearts, and ask ourselves this question, — What manner of creatures ought we to be? The Author of our being is a God of infinite purity and holiness; nothing can be united unto him, no being admitted to dwell in his presence, (in which there is fulness of joy,) who is in a state of impurity: there nothing that worketh an abomination or that loveth and maketh a lie, can have an entrance: for, it is positively asserted by the highest authority, that, without holiness, no man shall see the Lord. On the contrary, it is declared, *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God:—* that they shall have that union

union and communion with him, in which the happiness of all ranks and classes of intelligent beings most certainly depends. But there is another proposition that it will be well for us also seriously to consider, *if any man say that he hath no sin*, or that he has not sinned, (as some have rendered this passage,) *he deceiveth himself, and the truth is not in him.* *We have all*, says the prophet, *as sheep gone astray*, — strayed from the paths of the just into the wilderness of this world. We have all sinned : we have all fallen short of the glory of God. In this state, therefore, whatever vain expectations any may entertain, they are not fit subjects of the kingdom of heaven : they are under the power and government of the prince of the power of the air, which ruleth in the hearts of the children of disobedience. Those, therefore, who are in this state, have no ground of hope of being admitted into the kingdom of the just ; there is no communion between light and darkness, there is no fellowship between Christ and Belial ;

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and, indeed, our Lord positively asserts, *If ye die in your sins, where I go ye shall not come* ; therefore, though he came (the messenger from the Father was the Son of God, the eternal Word) with the glad tidings of the gospel to all the inhabitants of the earth, yet his coming became effectual only to those who received him. *I came*, says he, *to my own, but my own received me not; but, to as many as received me, gave I power to become the Sons of God*; as much as to say, Be ye not deceived, and imagine, that, in consequence of my coming, you are to be saved in your sins, or to have a licence from heaven to indulge your appetites. No: the purpose of my coming is not to save you in, but to save you from, your sins ; and it is a saying that is worthy of all acceptation, *that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners*. The Scriptures propose to us, and in a very explicit and comprehensive manner, what we must be before we can be accepted of his Father, who is in heaven. *Repent*, says he, *and*
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be converted, that your sins may be forgiven you: so that it seems we must, in the first instance, repent of those sins which we have committed. We must really feel those penitential affections of soul that would prompt us, if possible, to undo all the evil actions we have done; that would humble us most effectually under a sense of our ingratitude to the Author of our being, and that would prompt us, in the depth of our humiliation, to say, *a Saviour, or I die; a Redeemer, or I perish!* We must not only repent of our sins past, but we must also be converted; not repent of those that are past, and still pursue a course of iniquity, but we must turn from unrighteousness to righteousness; our affections must no longer be set upon things that are upon the earth, but upon things that are above; we must be no longer carnally, but spiritually, minded; for, under the most specious profession, to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace; and, such is the infinite mercy and goodness of God,

through Jesus Christ, towards us, that he wills not the death of sinners, that is, to see the eternal misery, or infelicity, of a sinner, but rather that all should return, should repent, and live a life of righteousness here, and, of course, be glorified with him hereafter in the kingdom of the just; and the terms which he proposes are worthy of the Supreme Being to give, and would become us to accept with all penitence of soul and gratitude of heart. *If, says he, ye confess your sins, God is merciful; he is just to forgive us our sins;—* not only to forgive the sins that are past, but, by the operation of his grace, to sanctify us throughout, to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness; and, of course, if we become cleansed from all unrighteousness, we shall be made meet for a habitation in the kingdom of heaven. Let us, therefore, be awakened to righteousness; awakened to righteousness from the nature of the dispensation we are under, that leads into every kind of purity and holiness, that so we may repent,
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and also be converted, —converted at heart, and experience redemption through his blood, which was shed for the sins of all mankind.

If we were thus to contemplate the nature of the gospel-dispensation; we, indeed, should become circumspect, we should be serious, we should be inquisitive; and this prayer would become as it were habitual, *Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me*; for, as it is the heart that is the object of conversion, by the power of an endless life, so it is the seat of sin. It is there the prince of darkness has usurped dominion; and he, being cast out, or the old man with his deeds put off, the peaceable kingdom of Immanuel is substituted; that kingdom which cannot be removed. If this became the serious engagement of our hearts, we should not only be induced to profess the Christian faith, but also to exemplify the love of its Author, of our Father who is in heaven, by observing those commandments which

are of universal obligation, and obedience to which is the rock which is immutable, against which the gates of hell shall never prevail. It is not merely holding forth the truths of the gospel that will render us acceptable; these may be held forth in theory, and yet held in unrighteousness, and will never avail us in the solemn season of the great day. Let us therefore advert to the close of that most excellent sermon, preached upon the mount. After many practical doctrines concerning the kingdom of heaven had been opened to the hearers, our Lord took occasion to distinguish between the mere hearer of the word, the formal professor, and one that was a true disciple. *If any man hear my words, and do them not, I will liken him unto a foolish man who built his house upon the sand; and the rains descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and the house fell, and great was the fall thereof.* So will it be with the hope of the hypocrite, for it shall perish. The hope of the hypocrite may buoy him up
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in the season of prosperity; but, in the season of adversity, it will fail him. When the rains shall descend, and the winds of adversity blow, he will not be able to stand the shock. When he passeth through the valley of the shadow of death, this hope will be like the lamps of the foolish virgins. *If any man bear these sayings of mine, and doeth them,—*(from which I infer they are practicable, and might be done, the contrary position implying the most daring reflection on the attributes of the divine being:—does he command us to make brick without straw? command us to do that which we have no power to perform? far be it from the Father of mankind:)—*If any man bear these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, who built his house upon a rock; and, when the rains descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, it fell not, because* (not of any intrinsic merit of his own, but because) *it was founded upon a rock,* the revelation of Jesus Christ, the foundation of the apos-

tles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone, disallowed indeed of men, who would wish to build a specious edifice on an unstable foundation, who follow lying vanities in opposition to every thing suited to an immortal spirit.

Let us, my friends, on this occasion, (a solemn occasion it is to me; we have before us the remains of a friend, taken off in the midst of her days, taken from the society of the living; but nothing has happened to her that is uncommon:—in the midst of life we are all in death, we have no dependence on to-morrow,) let us, I say, improve the present opportunity. Some, indeed, fall off as fruit which drops when it is come to full age, but others are, as it were, cut off with a noxious blast by the hand of him whose ways are all in wisdom. It is ours, therefore, to submit; and, seeing death is not assigned to any particular age, (as the arrows thereof enter into the habitations of the rich as well as the cottage

tage of the poor ; it separates the father from his children, the husband from his wife, the nearest and dearest connections in life ;) let us, seeing we have no continuing city here, seek one above, whose foundations are laid in Zion, and are immutable as the throne of God.

I feel my heart enlarged, I trust, in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose love constrains me to address you, my fellow-pilgrims, in this way. Let not the strong man glory in his strength, the rich man in his riches, nor the wise man in his wisdom ; but, if any man glories, let him glory in this, that his Redeemer stands in the relation to him of one that is full of mercy and truth. *Let him glory in me, that I am the Lord, who exercise loving-kindness, judgement, and righteousness, in the earth :* let us be solicitous that we may be accepted of the Father of the human race, when we shall have done with these transitory things. Every thing around us will serve to instruct an attentive mind. It is
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an awful truth, *Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble : he cometh up like a flower, and is cut down : like a shadow he fleeth, and continueth not.* With respect to many within the audience of my voice, the houses you possess were not long since possessed by your ancestors ; they are gone ; your children will soon have the same to say of you.

Let us therefore improve the present opportunity, according to that measure of grace which we have received, that we may be sanctified in body, soul, and spirit ; that we may have nothing to fear from that stroke which we cannot possibly shun ; then, to us, to live will be Christ, and to die will be gain. Let us so conduct ourselves in this world, that, when the end of the world shall come upon us, (for, with respect to individuals, their dissolution is the end of the world with them,) we may not be surprised. Let us, before we go hence to be seen no more of men, endeavour to lay up a good foundation against the time
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to come ; and then, when it shall please the great Disposer of all things to send the mes-
sage, whether in the early part of life, or
 in more advanced age, there will be hope
 in the death of the righteous. Their hope
 is full of immortality.

I commend these observations to you, and
 I commend you to God, and to the word
 of his grace, which is able to build you up,
 and give you an inheritance among all them
 who are sanctified by faith in the name of
Jesus Christ.

PRAYER

P R A Y E R

AT THE

CONCLUSION OF THE MEETING.

MOST gracious God, impress all our hearts at this season, we humbly beseech thee, with a suitable solemnity to approach thy awful presence ; that, inspired by the spirit of grace, we may make an offering that shall be acceptable with thee. We have, indeed, abundant cause to acknowledge that we have not the least degree of merit to plead. Whatever any of us possess, that is good, is of thee, from thee,

thee, and through the operation of thy grace. Be pleased yet more and more to impress us in a manner similar to the poor publican ; that, under a sense of our own unworthiness, we may call upon thy great and excellent name, with *Lord, be merciful to me a sinner !* That, through effectual humiliation and penitence of soul, thou mayst be pleased to cancel our transgressions from the book of thy remembrance, be merciful to our unrighteousness, and our iniquities remember no more : that, by the sanctifying influences of thy Spirit, our hearts may be also converted unto thee, that we may be cleansed from all unrighteousness, and enabled by thy grace to steer our course, in future, in the just man's path, which, as the bright and shining light, shineth more and more unto the perfect day : that we may pass the time of our sojourning here in fear, and may conclude our short pilgrimage in thy favour, having a well-grounded hope that we shall be accepted of thee, and admitted into the general assembly

bly of the just, the Church of the first-born, who are already triumphant in glory. O let us more and more feel the prevalence of the love of thy Son, and that it may be shed abroad more and more in our hearts, and circulate more and more among one another: that we may put away all malice, and wrath, and love one another with a love unfeigned in Christ: and O merciful Father, endue us more and more with that spirit of charity that thinketh no evil, that is not easily provoked, that extends not to our friends only, but also to our enemies, that we may lead one another to the beautiful mountain, the mountain of thy holiness, where the lion and the lamb shall lie down together, and a little child shall lead them: that the kingdoms of the earth may become the kingdoms of the Lord and of thy Son: that thy name may be great, among all the tribes of the Gentiles, from the rising of the sun to the setting of the same: that, O everlasting Father, thy creatures may be saved of thee with an everlasting salvation,
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bring thy sons and daughters from afar, to sit down in thy kingdom with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and praise and laud thy excellent name, who art worthy to receive the kingdom, power, and glory, both now and for evermore. Amen.

DISCOURSE

(217)

1. The first of these is the fact that the
 2. of the mind is not a simple matter
 3. and is a complex one, involving many
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41. The ninth of these is the fact that the
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61. The thirteenth of these is the fact that the
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66. The fourteenth of these is the fact that the
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71. The fifteenth of these is the fact that the
 72. of the mind is not a simple matter
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 74. of the mind, and it is not possible to
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76. The sixteenth of these is the fact that the
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81. The seventeenth of these is the fact that the
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86. The eighteenth of these is the fact that the
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DISCOURSE XII.

OF a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him.

I presume that most of you are acquainted with the particular cause of this declaration,—that an eminent apostle of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ seemed to have been of the opinion, that the gospel-message was not to extend unto the Gentiles. This was, perhaps, founded upon Jewish prejudice; and we are instructed, in this instance, of the power of prejudice to stop the ears and blind the eyes of a wise man.

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The most worthy and most exalted characters have, more or less, manifested in their conduct the power of prejudice,—the prejudice of education ; and, indeed, the wrong impressions, which mankind receive in their minority, generally are lasting, or with difficulty erased. They seem to be like characters which are cut out upon a tree, which grow wider and frequently deeper in proportion to the growth of the tree. Thus many prejudices, which mankind have received at an early time of life, are such, that they have not been capable of clearly distinguishing one object from another. They, as it were, grow with their growth, and are strengthened with their strength. I conceive these are those secret faults which the Psalmist intended when he said, *who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults.* It seems that an extraordinary dispensation of divine providence effectually removed this prejudice from the mind of the holy apostle. He was favoured with a vision, in which he saw,

saw, as it were, a sheet let down from heaven, containing various species of animals; and he was commanded to arise, to slay, and to eat; but he endeavoured to excuse himself by saying, that he had not eaten any thing that is common or unclean; upon which he was taught not to call that common or unclean which God had cleansed. The man to whom he was sent was a man of a sincere heart; his heart was right towards God; to him the glad tidings of the gospel were published, though he was a heathen. The mercy of God, through Jesus Christ, makes not that distinction, personal distinction, between the human species which the law of Moses made among the inferior animals, some of which were forbidden as unclean. The apostle saw the design of this vision, and there is no doubt that he felt his heart enlarged in a manner which, till then, he had been a stranger to. He now saw that the light of the gospel was freely to be preached to all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people.

He saw that Immanuel was a light to enlighten the Gentiles as well as to be the glory of the people of Israel. *I have set him to be a light to the Gentiles, to be for salvation unto the ends of the earth*; not within the narrow circle of any party of human beings, not within the limits of any spot upon the face of the globe, but to be for salvation to the very ends of the earth. He, in the enlargement of his heart, breaks forth in this manner, *Of a truth, says he, I perceive.* From which I infer that he had seen, as it were, darkly through a glass; for, though, perhaps, friendly admonitions may not effectually remove our prejudices, yet, sometimes at least, they are conducive to this end. We begin to suspect we err, and a man who begins to suspect he errs is in the way to understand his errors; whereas the obstinate may be compared to a man who shuts his eyes, and, of course, will not be enabled to discriminate objects even at noon-day; but the man, who begins to suspect that he errs, or that he may err, begins

gins to open the door of his heart to conviction, and the apostle seemed to have had some glimmering of this glorious truth ; but now the scales of prejudice fell from his eyes : his mental sight was clear. *Of a truth*, says he, *I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him ;* and, I must confess, though it very unexpectedly appears to be my duty to confess it now, that, of all those doctrines which I conceive to be errors, of all those things which I conceive are not agreeable either to reason, to the nature of things, or to the Scriptures of truth, there is not one which to me is so palpable as the doctrine of partial election and reprobation ; that is to say, that God, by virtue of his sovereignty, did, of his own good will and pleasure, create a certain number of intelligent beings, not only foreseeing that they would sin, and be lastingly miserable, but for that very purpose ; that their misery is in consequence of his eternal decree ; that the other

part, whether few or more, are ordained to everlasting life ; not in consideration of any merit which they possess, (for, it is acknowledged that the elect possess no more merit than the reprobate ; that the righteousness with which they are clothed is the righteousness of Christ ; that they are saved by virtue of the propitiatory sacrifice of the Son of God ; that, by nature, they are black, they are vile, as the reprobate, but that they are comely with grace, as they stand related to Christ Jesus, who is the head of his Church ;) not in consideration therefore of any thing they can merit, but of God's sovereign pleasure. But I would wish every one present seriously to consider, whether a greater reflection could be cast upon the divine attributes, unless it were to say that he created all mankind to be eternally miserable. That God, the Father of the spirits of all flesh, to whom we are indebted for our existence, and who of his pleasure did create us, should do it with a view of making us, or any part of his creatures,

creatures, everlastingly miserable, is such an idea that I confess shocks me. I say it shocks me. *Shall not the judge of all the earth do right ?* He is not only a God of justice, but he is a God of goodness ; but how can this be reconciled with goodness, that a Being should purposely bring others into being in order to make them miserable ? It is repugnant to every idea that I can form of the Deity. It is a disposition, indeed, that appears to me to bespeak the nature of a tyrant, the nature of that being who is said to go about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour ; but this, as well as other erroneous doctrines, is said to be founded upon the Scriptures. Thus the Scriptures are made to contradict themselves, the literal sense is adopted where that sense coincides with the pre-conceived opinion ; but, where the literal sense accords not with that opinion, it is tortured a thousand ways to express what the Holy Ghost never intended, — whatever the parties wish it to speak. Thus passages, ob-

viously figurative, have been considered as literal; and others, appearing plain, even to common sense, to experience, to our common feelings, and to the nature of things, such have been rendered mysterious by various comments, in which truth has been obscured by the multitude of words without knowledge. But, I conceive, if we consider the holy Scriptures, from the first chapter of Genesis to the last in Revelations; if we are capable of laying aside our prejudices; we shall see that they do assert the unity of God, his self-sufficiency, his omnipotence, his omniscience. The universality of his love to his creatures is the scope and tendency of the sacred pages, and *that* the motive of all the dispensations of his providence to mankind. His views (if I may use that expression of the Ancient of days) terminated not upon himself, who is incapable of an accession of happiness, neither upon the misery of his creatures, to which he could have no motive, but they terminated in the creature who is capable
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of immortality and eternal life. The Supreme Being, I conceive, to be the only perfectly disinterested being in the universe: perhaps, a parent, for instance, (if the comparison may at all be allowed,) a wife, an affectionate, parent, may bear some humble resemblance of the universal Father. He is often set forth to us under the endearing character of our Father: *as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.* He knows our frame, he remembers that we are but dust; but the parent, who possesses the most delicate parental feelings, discovers the utmost solicitude for the happiness of his offspring, and will find his happiness intimately connected therewith. Such is the nature of that affection, strengthened by moral ties, that a parent and his offspring may be said to be connected by so many fibres of the heart: his happiness is bound up in his offspring: he must rejoice when they rejoice, and suffer when they are afflicted. In alleviating their afflictions, he alleviates
his

his own : in promoting the happiness of his children, he promotes his own felicity ; but, respecting the divine Being, the analogy will not strictly hold. *Thy righteousness, as the text saith, may profit the son of man, and thy wickedness may hurt a man as thou art.* The observance of the laws of virtue, of righteousness, and truth, would promote the essential interests of society. It would produce that harmony throughout all the classes of social life, in which the greatest degree of happiness is to be experienced. Vice, on the contrary, is not only prejudicial to the interests of the individual, but its evil influence extends, far and wide, within the circumference of society. Therefore, our righteousness may profit men as we are, our wickedness may hurt the children of men, but our righteousness cannot profit him who is perfect, absolutely perfect, absolutely good, self-sufficient, the same yesterday, to day, and for ever, with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. It is not the united
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supplications of all the souls within the limits of his vastly-extended empire that can add to his essential glory, that can add to his felicity ; neither is it the neglect of the worship of all ranks and orders of intelligent creatures that can diminish his glory, that can decrease his felicity ; therefore, his motive, in creating and communicating good to his creatures, must be a motive perfectly disinterested ; it is love without the least species of alloy. God's love was the adorable motive of his making beings capable of contemplating his attributes, and of that felicity which is derived from him : this was the glorious motive (if I may be indulged to speak of the divine Being by attributing to him motives) that induced him to create the various orders and classes of intelligent beings, in this and every other sphere, from the seraph above, that attends upon the sacred throne, to the lowest link in the scale of rational intelligent creatures. And, in thus contemplating the Deity, I find the best affections of my heart excited towards

towards him, my parent, in a sense infinitely superior to that natural relation which subsists among the human species and creatures : and, under this character, are we instructed to approach the Supreme Being, *Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name* ; in which there is something that strikes me with peculiar force, that individuals, when they approach the sacred altar of the Lord Almighty, and prefer their petitions to him who sees in secret, are not to consider themselves as detached from society ; they are not to implore the blessing for themselves alone. It is not *my* Father, but *our* Father, which art in heaven, hallowed by thy name ; by which we are instructed, that God is no respecter of persons, that we all stand in the same relation to him, who is the God and Father of the spirits of all flesh. Remember that the Scripture declares, that he is good to all. Can he be good to them, whom, by an eternal irrevocable decree, he has consigned to everlasting misery ? But God is good to
all ;

all; therefore he has not predestinated to everlasting misery the creature he has formed, which would be, in the most obvious sense of the words, to be a respecter of persons, and must arise from a motive of partiality. We are instructed to respect no man's person; but this doctrine supposes that the divine Being respects persons himself.

Various are those passages of Scripture which might be educed, that bear a plain and obvious meaning, in opposition to this doctrine. And, though there may be some figurative passages of a doubtful tendency, in which the apostle assumes a borrowed style in his way of arguing with the Jews, yet I can never agree to explain plain passages by bold figures. We are abundantly instructed that he willeth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should be turned, and live: that he should repent, and be saved with an everlasting salvation. We are also instructed, that, to them who seek for glory, honour, and immortality, God will render

render eternal life; but, unto them who obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, *tribulation and anguish, indignation and wrath, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, so the Jew first, and also of the Gentile*; for, there is no respect of persons with God.

Let us, therefore, impressed with what I conceive are worthy notions of the Supreme Being, walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we have been called. The power of the gospel of Jesus is gone forth from sea to sea, from the rivers to the ends of the earth. The call of infinite mercy and goodness is extended to people of all names and all nations, to bring them into a state of moral rectitude, to qualify them for the society of the wise and worthy upon earth, and for the everlasting communion of the spirits of the just made perfect in heaven: for this end is the gospel preached to every creature under heaven. I wish that it may be remembered with the solemnity with which it ought to be remembered,

bered, that it is not any system of faith, it is not any profession of the purity of the gospel of Jesus Christ our Lord, it is not the acknowledgement of his mission, it is not a speaking most honourably of his adorable character, of his ministry, of his crucifixion, of his resurrection, and ascension into glory, nor of the propitiatory sacrifice which he made for the whole world, that can render us acceptable to the Father of spirits : the ground of our acceptance with God is upon the same universal principle of righteousness delivered by God in his remonstrance with Cain : *Why art thou wroth, and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and, if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door.* He was overcome by the power of, perhaps, one of the basest passions the human heart is capable of. He was excited to destroy his brother, because he found that his offering was accepted, that he had tokens of divine approbation. He was excited to slay him. The passion of envy excited him

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to shed human blood on the earth. With this Cain, this murderer, the Author of the universe deigns to expostulate in a very familiar manner : *Why is thy countenance fallen ? If thou doest well, shalt not thou be accepted ? but, if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door :* so that, though, with respect to external profession, and the external mode of offering their sacrifices, they might be alike, yet, as the state of the heart of one was wicked, and productive of wicked actions, he was not accepted with his gift at the sacred altar ; whereas, righteous Abel, who not only lifted up his hands to the habitation of God's holiness, and conformed to the outward sacrifice, but was justly impressed with a sense of his duty, became the object of the divine complacency : *because thou hast loved righteousness, and bated iniquity, therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.* Though this, perhaps, may have a peculiar relation, as some have considered it, to the Messiah, yet it seems also to have a relation
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to a discrimination among creatures,—*because thou hast loved righteousness; therefore,—it is not in consequence of a specious profession, not because of an irrevocable decree,—but, because thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity, therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.* Oh! that there may be a proper emulation in us to excel in doing well. Cease, therefore, to do evil, learn to do well. As doing evil was the means of bringing down judgements upon the people of the Jews, so they were instructed how to avert the divine wrath, and render themselves acceptable to the Father of the universe; not by an attendance to the rituals of that dispensation,—*Bring no more vain oblations: incense is an abomination unto me, saith the Lord: your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth:—but they were instructed what to do: Wash ye, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do well; seek judgement; relieve the*
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oppressed,

oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Here is a catalogue of excellent moral duties, here is an explanation of what it is to do well. *He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* Now, says he, come, and let us reason together: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow: though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land. Let us therefore conform ourselves to the terms by which we are to be accepted. Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but, in every nation, he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted of him. Let us therefore cherish in our breasts, in the first instance, the emotions of filial fear, which is distinguished from that slavish passion of which man is the object. Such a fear is evidently to be distinguished from that affection we have to the Ancient of days. I compare that to the fear which an affectionate

ate child has of its parent, which springs from love ; which, indeed, is the best and most worthy motive of our duties : we, therefore, fear not the Almighty Being merely because he is armed with an uncontrollable power, and able to consign us to eternal woe, who rides upon a cherub, and the clouds are the dust of his feet, and doeth whatsoever he pleaseth :—we fear him not only because of the attributes of power, but of goodness, the adorable attributes of goodness, mercy, and truth. He has dealt with us not in a way of rigid justice, but according to the compassion of a father. He has bowed the heavens, and manifested himself among his creatures : for, he so loved the world, that he sent his only begotten Son into the world, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life ; therefore, let him be the object of our fear ; and of this fear many excellent things are spoken as to its effects by way of prevention. It is a fountain of life to preserve from the snare of

death : the fear of the Lord keepeth the heart clean ; therefore, *blessed is the man that feareth always.* And, indeed, it is the first part of the everlasting gospel that was preached by an angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying, with a loud voice, *Fear God, and give glory to him ; for, the hour of his judgement is come ; and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters : feare ye him !* This principle of filial fear will incline our ears to an attention to his law, and we shall be meditators therein day and night ; and shall not only be hearers of the word, but doers of it. Under the influence of this fear, we shall work the work of righteousness, the fruit of which is peace and assurance for ever.

If we observe this rule of right, if we conform ourselves to him, we shall be united to the Author of our being in an union
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that is indissoluble, and firm as the everlasting hills. *Keep my commandments, (says Christ to his disciples,) and abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.* Blessed is the man that keeps the commandments of God: he shall have access to the tree of life, and enter through the gates into the city, become citizens with the saints, and of the household of God. God grant, of his infinite mercy and goodness, that, when the days of our pilgrimage shall be ended, we may have an admission into the assembly of just and pure spirits, to contemplate the attributes of the *I AM*: that we may sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the lamb, saying, *Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty: just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints!*

PRAYER

P R A Y E R

A T T H E

CONCLUSION of the MEETING.

MOST gracious God, and Father of all, we beseech thee, manifest thy presence, that, impressed with the emotions of filial fear, we may approach thy holy altar with becoming reverence, pour forth our souls unto thee, and offer thee a sacrifice of thanksgiving and praise : that the contemplation of thy name may impress our hearts with peculiar solemnity. Thou, who standest in the adorable relation to us of a father,

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ther, thy goodness hath been extended to us from season to season, from the first moment of our existence to the present moment. It is of thy bounty that we are supplied with all those blessings which we have received. Inspire us, we beseech thee, with the highest sense of thy merciful goodness, that, O most gracious Father, though heaven be thy throne, and the earth be thy footstool, continue, we beseech thee, to look down upon us with favour, and regard the low estate of thy creatures. Sound an awakening alarm in the ears of the ignorant, those who are reclined upon the beds of ease, who live in forgetfulness of thee, and of the obligations they are under to thee. O Grant that these may awake to righteousness, that they sin not; that, under an awful sense of thy goodness, we may approach thy altar at this season, and offer to thee thanksgiving and praise, ascribing to thee glory, might, majesty, and dominion, and every other excellent attribute and perfection,

perfection, of which thou art worthy, not only now, but also henceforth, and for evermore. Amen.

THE END.

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